



10- 282/

TUFTS COLLEGE LIBRARY.

THE GIFT

OF

MRS. RYDER,

FROM THE LIBRARY OF HER
LATE HUSBAND,

REV. WM. H. RYDER, D.D.,

DEC., 1888. 24264.



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2015

THE
HISTORY
OF THE
LIVES
OF
ABEILLARD and HELOISA;

COMPRISING A PERIOD OF EIGHTY-FOUR YEARS

From 1079 to 1163.

WITH THEIR GENUINE
LETTERS,
FROM THE COLLECTION OF AMBOISE.

A NEW EDITION.

Personne n'est obligé d'écrire l'histoire ; mais quiconque
l'entreprend s'engage à dire la vérité toute entière.

FLEURY, DISC. 4.

By the Rev. JOSEPH BERINGTON.

VOLUME I.

BASIL:

Printed and sold BY J. J. TOURNEISEN.

MDCCXCIII.

107

113 T O R I

107 10

113 T O R I

10

113 T O R I

113 T O R I

113 T O R I

113 T O R I

113 T O R I

113 T O R I

113 T O R I

113 T O R I

113 T O R I

113 T O R I

113 T O R I

24264.00

BX

4705

A2B4

1793

v.1

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE indulgence with which the public has received the History of Abeillard and Heloisa, induces me to venture on this second edition. I have made no alterations in the work itself; because the expediency of doing it was not suggested even by the critics. But I have prefixed an Introduction of some length, containing a general view of that part of the eleventh century, which had preceded the period I described. It will be given gratis to the purchasers of the first edition. The whole volume I now mean should be an Introduction to the history of the succeeding periods, which I purpose, at

ADVERTISEMENT.

my leisure, to carry down to the beginning of the sixteenth century. It comprises three hundred and fifty years. Two large volumes, I hope, will contain the whole, which shall be published separately.

THE
P R E F A C E.

THE History of the Lives of Abeillard and Heloisa, which I now offer to the public, has, in some sense, been the work of many years. No one has ever read Mr. Pope's inimitable poem, without being interested in the fate of the lovers, whose sad and tender story, he, as a poet, has told so well. This interest I felt, and I was prompted to inquire more into the real history of their lives. The first annals of the church, I could meet with, soon gave me the information I wanted, and I found that the general impression made by the poet's tale was not to be relied on. Abeillard, I saw, had not one trait of the character, he had portrayed; and that Heloisa merited a much more favorable delineation. I also discovered that they were great and conspicuous personages,

who had commanded the attention of the age, and whose virtues their contemporaries even had been careful to celebrate. I then viewed the other characters, and the general events of the period, in which they lived, and they were interesting I saw, and momentous. Should I ever become an author, I thought, I would attempt *the History of the Lives of Abeillard and Heloisa*. — My motives then are laudable.

At a time, when truths of every kind are so eagerly investigated, and those of history in particular, I have chosen a dark period; and if I can bring it before the public in any form that may raise attention, my design will be satisfied. I own, I have some confidence in the imposing names of Abeillard and Heloisa. — The learned reader must not expect to find any thing absolutely new. Where was I to look for novelty in the records of the eleventh and twelfth centuries? But as I have taken the liberty to form my own judgment on the characters and facts, I have described, it may be that, sometimes, I shall seem to suggest new ideas, or to present an old object in a new point of view. It will be well, if some critics may not

think it would have been better, I had adhered more religiously to some opinions, which age seems to have sanctioned. I would have done it, could I have been prevailed on to believe that our ancestors were not men, open to prejudice and false impressions. There are circumstances, when it is rather advantageous to be placed at some distance from an object. Its light is not so dazzling, the medium is less troubled, and the eye of the spectator is more serene and steady. What errors has not the cool sagacity of modern criticism corrected in the too credulous annals of former times?

In writing the present history I had then more in view, than the bare delineation of the two principal characters: but of these I have never lost sight. It was impossible, indeed, so to draw the events of the period together, as to make them appear like branches from the leading object; for, in their origin, they were not connected with it. At any time, how little connexion has the life of a literary man, and much less that of a cloistered nun, with the schemes of politicians, and the feats of warriors? What links, the

then disunited state of mankind threw into the events, I trust, I have not broken; and perhaps some harmony of parts, and unity of design, may be discovered.

They who, from the title of my work, shall expect the entertainment of a novel, will be disappointed. I profess to give a genuine history; and am I to blame, if Abcillard and Heloisa were not so romantic, as the heroes of modern tales; or if their lives were less crowded with extraordinary and incredible adventures? Heloisa, however, will sometimes, I think, be able to keep pace with the wildest flights of fancy. — But the reader must be unconscionably unreasonable in his expectations, who, whatever be his cast of character, shall not find, in such a variety of matter, something to gratify his curiosity. I have treated of love, religion, philosophy, politics, and war. The crusades are great events, and the characters of distinguished men, but little known to the generality of readers, are doubtless interesting objects. — My inability to perfect so various a plan I am not ashamed to own,

and in this sentiment, I can call more confidently for indulgence.

A few years ago I translated, for my amusement, the letters of Abeillard and Heloisa, and that circumstance it was, which revived the idea, I mentioned to have before entertained, of writing their history. The sources of information were, I knew, genuine and abundant. I drew them round me; and nothing remained but to realize my favorite project. — The reader shall know what these sources were.

In 1616, was published, for the first time, at Paris, a complete edition of Abeillard's works. They had been collected with much care by Francis d'Amboise, a great favorite in the courts of Charles IX. and his brother Henry III. and who gradually was promoted to offices of high trust in the state. From his childhood, he says', he had been always fond of looking into old libraries, and turning over dusty manuscripts. In some of these researches he laid his hands on the letters of Abeillard and Heloisa; he read them with much pleasure, and was induced to

* Præf. Apolog. p. 2.

pursue his inquiries. He found other works of the same author; but they were ill-written, and not to be unravelled, without great labor. Nothing can withstand the indefatigable toil of a true antiquarian. Amboise procured other manuscripts: he collated them together, and finally produced one fair copy, which made ample compensation, he says, for all the labor he had taken. Even posterity, he thinks, will be grateful to him, and know how to value the pleasure and the profit, they will derive from his researches. With how partial an eye, indeed, do we contemplate our own, favorite pursuits!

Not satisfied with the dear copy he possessed, Amboise still wished to enlarge it. He applied to different monasteries, and he again searched the libraries in Paris, and not without success. His friends applauded his zeal, and gave him their assistance. His manuscripts swelled to a large bulk, and he read, arranged, and selected what pleased him best. The rising sun, he says, often found him at his task. So far fortune had smiled upon his labors, and he did not doubt but soon he should be able to present the public

with the rich jewel he possessed. But little was wanting to give it the last finish. Warm with the idea, he went over to the Paraclet. The abbess, Madame de Rochefoucauld received him with the greatest politeness. He declared the motive of his journey: she took him by the hand and led him to the tomb of Abeillard and Heloïsa. Madame was his relation. Together they examined the library of the abbey; and she showed him many hymns, and prayers, and homilies, written by their founder, which were still used in their church².—Amboise then returned to Paris, and prepared his work for the press.

As the reputation of his author, he knew, had been much aspersed by some contemporary writers, he wished to remove the undeserved stigma, and to present him as immaculate, as might be, before the eyes of a more discerning age. With this view he wrote a long *apologetic preface*, which, he meant, should be prefixed to the work. In this preface, a composition inelegant and affected, Amboise labors much to show that,

² Præf. Apolog. p. 6.

Abeillard was the greatest and best man, and Heloisa the greatest and best woman, whom the annals of human kind had recorded. He first, very fairly, adduces the testimony of those, who had spoken evil of them, whom he combats and refutes. To these succeeds a list of their admirers. He dwells on their every word, and gives more weight to their expressions; and the result is, what we were prepared to expect from the pen of Amboise.—The compilation, however, contains some curious matter, and may be read with pleasure. The antiquarian himself did not, I believe, live to see his work before the public, for it was not printed till the year 1616, and that, as the king's licence expresses, by Nicholas Buon.

The reader will find, in the course of the following history, what this edition contains. The letters form, by much, the most curious part, and at the head of these is the *Historia Calamitatum*, or, the *memoirs* of his own life, which Abeillard wrote to a friend, and which I often quote. It is indeed the only genuine repository, from

which many circumstances of his life can be drawn.

To these *memoirs*, Andrew du Chesne, under the affected appellation of *Quercetanus*, wrote illustrative notes, which are subjoined to Amboise's collection. They are very curious, and often throw great light on the subject. — Du Chesne lived in the last century; and, from his great researches into the history and antiquities of France, he has deserved to be styled the father of their history. He and Amboise were friends. Some critics have ascribed the whole edition of the works of Abeillard to him; but without sufficient foundation.

It is from the authors, quoted by Amboise in his preface, or by Du Chesne in his notes, that I have taken some anecdotes, and many particular circumstances, which, intentionally, I have never failed to acknowledge. I could have no motive for appearing ungrateful to my benefactors.

Modern writers, who speak of Abeillard, have taken their materials from his memoirs, and I was surprised, on many occasions, to find them so inaccurate. His contemporaries treated him,

as they were affected by passion, or interest, or partiality, or truth, and their opinions have been variously copied. But there is very little to be collected from the writers of the age. They were too intent on displaying the martial prowess of their masters, or on recording the extravagant pretensions of the Roman pontiffs, or on blazoning the miraculous achievements of their favorite saints, to attend to the comparatively uninteresting characters of more private life. Otho Frisingensis, Geoffrey, a monk of Clairvaux, Bernard of Citaux, and Peter the venerable, abbot of Cluni, are the writers who principally mention Abeillard.

Bayle, among the moderns, a man of vast abilities, but which he too often abused to insult religion and to injure virtue, in his *Historical and Critical Dictionary*, has entered very diffusely on the lives of Abeillard and Heloisa. Agreeably to his wonted practice he had read every thing, which history had recorded of them, and all that he retails with the greatest profusion. In his notes he pours out his own observations, which are sometimes hazarded, and his criticisms, which are

not always just. Whatever his teeming memory could, on the occasion, suggest, he heaps together, and his prurient imagination runs to modern anecdotes and ancient fables, in quest of obscenity and vulgar imagery. Modesty had never a more determined adversary to contend with. There is much, I know, to be learned from this man; but I would not look for pearls in a dunghill. On the present occasion, he has been of little use to me: the facts he relates, I could draw from their source, and I could not copy his loose digressions, or his indecent allusions.—His strictures on Heloisa are remarkably unjust, and it is clear that he wilfully misrepresented her character. Expressions in her letters, which malevolence may pervert, are to him demonstrations of her guilt, and the language of confidence and sincerity is the speech of meretricious impudence.—As his own heart, probably, was insensible to the impressions of virtue, and he could not pity distress, I am not much surpris'd at the indecency of *his* remarks, and the general flippancy of *his* pen; but that two clergymen of the church of England,

should have translated the most exceptionable passages of his dictionary, and should have added, by their translation, to their grossness, is not quite so pardonable. -- I am not sufficiently severe either on Bayle or his translators.

In Moreri, or rather in the voluminous work which goes under his name, the life of Abeillard is very accurately given, as to its principal incidents. Some mistakes there are, which might have been easily corrected, by more attention to his own memoirs. — The more I have had occasion to examine the works of others, the more have I been convinced that histories, supposed the most authentic, are very little to be relied on. Characters misrepresented, dates mistaken, and facts mistated, are then most common, when we look for accuracy, precision, and truth. The circumstance indeed is natural; for it is, on these occasions, that the historian is most swayed by passion, by party, by prejudice. When there is no motive to mislead his judgment, or to bias his will, he will deviate less, unless his negligence or inattention be great: but in trifles, (if the business of mankind can ever be so denominated), it matters

little

little whether truth or falshood preponderate. — What really are the qualities to constitute the best historian, is hard to say. To require that he should be of no country, is requiring a thing impossible; and to say that he should have no religion, is a puerile demand. The philosophical unbeliever is generally intolerant in his practice, and always prejudiced in his ideas. The race has been tried as historians without success. Till a man can be found without passions, and then he would be insipid; without prejudice, and then he would want interest; without party, and then he would not be read; we must be satisfied with such historians as the common lot of humanity can supply, and read their writings, with the same indulgence, as we do a romance. If they give us pleasure, it will be well; and the most sanguine author seldom looks for a better reward to his labors. I mean not this as any apology for my own work; for I profess to be as accurate as I can, and as truthful as the character of my records will allow.

In 1720, the lives of Abeillard and Heloisa were published in two volumes at Paris: Dom Gervaise,

third abbot of la Trappe, is the author. He wrote them during his confinement at Notre-dame des Reclus, where he spent the fifty last years of his life. At the recommendation of de Rancé, first abbot of la Trappe, and who, worn down by austerities, had surrendered his charge, Dom Gervaise was elected to the important office. By nature headstrong and impetuous, bizarre in his humor, and singular in his maxims, (dispositions, which the incessant labor and dreadful rigors of the place had not corrected), he was ill-formed to conduct an institution, which demanded a man of peace, of prudence, of constancy of benevolence. The general regulations of the abbey he wished again to reform, and, as much as might be, to depart from the wise maxims of their founder. De Rancé saw the danger which threatened his new establishment, and he was yet able to avert it. Dom Gervaise, by an order from court, was dismissed. For some time, irritated and restless, he wandered from solitude to solitude, till, by another order, he was confined, as I just mentioned. Here, for he was a man of some abilities, and of much reading,

he applied himself to the compilation of various works¹.

The work before me is written with care and honesty. Dom Gervaise had leisure, and he employed it in perusing the best records. The style is heavy, his reflections often uninteresting, and his periods loose, negligent, and redundant. Though so unhappily constituted, as I described him, still he had a mind, which was turned to piety, or he affected to appear religious and abstracted. In these dispositions he viewed Abeillard as a great saint, and such he delineates his character, and Heloisa, his wife, was not, he thinks, a less perfect pattern of all the virtues. Dom Gervaise shall speak for himself.

“ Cet Abeillard si connu, et en même tems
 “ si inconnu, va donc paroître au naturel dans
 “ cet ouvrage. On le verra né avec un bel
 “ esprit, capable des sciences les plus sublimes,
 “ devenu grand Philosophe malgré ses inclinations
 “ un peu trop tendres: la fin tragique de son amour
 “ pour Héloïse l’ayant conduit à une généreuse

¹ Dict. Hist.

“ pénitence. Entré dans l'état monastique, il y
“ paroitra un des plus illustres abbés de son tems,
“ & comme un martyr par l'austérité de sa vie, &
“ par les cruelles persécutions qu'il souffrit pour
“ maintenir la discipline régulière. La grandeur
“ de son ame, sa patience héroïque, éclatent dans
“ tous ses travers. Cependant on le voit fondateur
“ d'ordre, législateur de loix, qui vont de pair
“ avec celles des Basiles et des Pacomes; savant
“ theologien, qui a souvent pris la plume pour
“ défendre les vérités orthodoxes attaquées de son
“ tems; un grand maître qui a formé de saints
“ prélats, dont les lumières ont long tems éclairé
“ l'église, qu'il a lui même enrichie de savans
“ écrits, dont nous avons encore la meilleure partie.
“ Mais la plus rare de toutes ces grandes qualités
“ est, qu'avec ce génie qui lui acquit une réputation
“ des plus étendues, il eut la modestie et l'humilité
“ du plus parfait religieux. — L'enchaînement des
“ matières, qui ne permet pas d'écrire la vie
“ d'Abeillard sans tracer en même tems celle
“ d'Héloïse, découvre le triomphe de la grâce
“ sur un cœur le plus attaché à la créature. Sa
“ pénitence est un exemple pour celles qui ont

“ eu le malheur de l'avoir suivie dans sa chute.
“ Pendant vingt deux années qu'elle a survecu
“ à son époux , elle est un modele des vertus
“ religieuses et de conduite pour les superieures.
“ Enfin Héloïse nous donne à douter si la vie
“ d'Abeillard est plus digne de nos admirations
“ que la sienne*.”

After this opening, which is in the true style of panegyric, I was not to expect much truth of character: for Abeillard, I was well aware, had more in his composition of the sinner than the saint, and in Heloisa the triumphs of grace were not always so brilliant as those of nature. No views can be more opposite than those of Bayle and Gervaise; but unhappily truth never lies in the extremes. Their portraits are fancy-pieces, which may serve to delineate the minds of the artists, rather than the originals they are said to represent. I have, however, derived some advantage from Gervaise, and in general I have followed his arrangement of materials. The objects we view very differently, and consequently our works have

* Pref. p. 3.

but a faint resemblance. Whose eye be most just, the reader may determine. I can say, that I neglected nothing to clear the medium, and to fix a proper point of view.

I also procured extracts from the *Annals* of Argentré and Papire Masson, from the *History of Britany* by Lobineau, and from Pasquier's *Recherches*. With these materials, joined to the information which the writers of the age supplied, I found myself in possession of all the evidence, which my subject seemed to require. As far then as any history can be pronounced genuine, the work I present to the public may, I flatter myself, be deemed so.

It has been thought by some that, I have chosen a subject which did not merit so much attention.—To the observation I know not what to reply: let the work make its own apology. It was at least benevolent in me to wish to free from obloquy two characters, that had been much aspersed; and the public, I think, should be pleased with a narration, which brings to their better acquaintance names, which so long were familiar to their ears. In

common life the incident is particularly agreeable. After all, what are the important matters which may be supposed to *merit* the researches of the learned, and the notice of the public? I am not disposed to think lightly of my contemporaries, or of their tastes and pursuits; but, I trust, the history of Abeillard and Heloisa will not in all company, even the most popular, see reason to blush. I speak of the subject only.

A few years ago, I remember, the *Memoirs* of Petrarch were in every body's hands, and the general interest they excited was great. Shall I detract from the reputation of the Italian poet if I say that Abeillard was as great a man as he? As great a poet he was not; nor was he employed, as Petrarch was, in the concerns of politics and the intrigues of courts. Fortune was more favorable to the Italian; but her best gifts, the plaudits of admiring cities, and the smiles of popes and potentates, could not make him happy, or settle the eternal restlessness of his mind. Abeillard was equally admired by his contemporaries; his fame even had a wider spread: but the opposition of powerful enemies thwarted all his prospects, and dashed his life with

bitterness. They were both lovers: and here as Abeillard was more successful, so was his affection, while it lasted, more within the bounds of common sense and reason. They both celebrated their mistresses. At the time, the compositions of Abeillard were in great vogue, and they were repeated in the politest circles of Europe. Those of Petrarch have come down the stream of time, buoyant, and swelled by the gale of popular applause. Refuse our admiration to the various beauties they contain we cannot; but we may be permitted to think that Petrarch, when he praised his Laura, was too precise and ingenious to be sincere. He wrote three hundred and eighteen sonnets in her praise, and eighty-eight songs.

With more confidence Heloise may enter the lists with Laura. The latter (a little beauty only excepted, and to that the poet's pencil seems to have given no light tinge of coloring), possessed few endowments of art or nature. Virtuous she was and amiable; but we know she could not write, and we do not know that she could read. Heloise, on the contrary, we may presume, had equal beauty; and she had every qualification, which

nature, in her kindest humors, could give, or education could perfect. I will not anticipate: but she was gentle and mild as innocence; learned as the most learned of the age; her soul was Roman; and her heart was a heart of fire.—Had Abeillard and Heloisa been blessed with a de Sade to collect their *Memoirs*, with family-kindness, as Petrarch and Laura have, they might have acquired, perhaps, an equal share of public notice and esteem.—In his treatise *de vita Solitaria*, Petrarch speaks of Abeillard, of his abilities, of some events of his life, and of his misfortunes¹.

But though I may view in a favorable light the two leading characters of my history, I was not less sensible, that, auxiliary force would be necessary to give them consistency and due weight, in the public eye: I have therefore called to my assistance all the great facts and the principal personages, who filled the period of the eighty-four years, which measured the lives of Abeillard and Heloisa. The authors, I consulted on these matters, are not numerous; for I was persuaded that, to write with

¹ Lib. 2.

accuracy, it was better not to heap together many volumes, which, if they did not perplex the judgement, could only serve the ostentatious purpose of crowding the line of references with the display of great names. — In ecclesiastical history, my chief guides were Fleury and Natalis Alexander, in the history of France, Daniel: and in that of England, Mr. Hume. Where I could, I also consulted the original sources themselves.

It is not, I am sure, necessary that I should say, how good a man, and how great a historian, abbé Fleury was. Among his many valuable works, his History of the Church, from its foundation to the council of Constance, stands foremost. It is rather indeed a learned compilation, than a regular and connected narration; but it contains every thing which, the most scrupulous inquirer can wish to look for, and it is told with simplicity and honest candor, which, at once portrays the amiable character of the writer, and delights the reader; while he says that, such must be the man, whom Truth would chuse for her historian! — The preliminary *discourses* or dissertations, interspersed in these volumes, are of infinite value. They are

written with more elegance and more care than the general body of the history; and they treat of the manner of writing history, of the establishment of christianity, and of the various revolutions, which have attended its progress, of the crusades, of the dissensions betwixt the church and the civil power, and of the origin and decline of religious orders. On these subjects; so important and so delicate, Fleury has said all, that good sense and the most consummate wisdom could suggest, and he has said it with a freedom, which would do honor to the most unprejudiced and philosophic mind. Without fear he brings to view the evils and gross abuses which have disfigured the christian establishment; for he lays it down as a maxim, that all truth should be spoken; and with sagacity he suggests the remedies which should be applied.—With Fleury then I have made very free, and the reader will thank me for it.

Natalis Alexander, or Alexander Noel, is another French historian, whom I often quote. He wrote very voluminously on ecclesiastical matters, and his researches are profound and learned. The dissertations, which are numerous, are calculated to

throw light on the dark and difficult points of history. His quotations, from ancient authors, are full and accurate, which renders his compilation itself a library. — I have likewise had recourse to Platina and Maimbourg, principally for the history of the popes and the crusades.

These I have mentioned are Roman Chatholic historians; and it will be asked, if I have relied implicitly on their representations? — Let it be observed that, I am describing times which preceded the existence of Protestantism four hundred years; the *sources* of my information therefore must necessarily be catholic. As to modern writers, I chose those, in whom, it seemed, I could place most confidence; nor did I once think what mode of religion they had professed. But it will not among the learned, I fancy, as yet be made a question, which church has had the best historians.

Daniel, a dry and uninteresting narrator, I read for the history of France, and Hume, sometimes, for that of England.

Thus I have mentioned my principal authors, and acknowledged my obligations. It remains that I say, into what arrangement I have thrown my

materials.—The whole period comprises eighty-four years, which I have divided into such portions, as seemed best adapted to mark the epochs of Abeillard's life; and concomitant events and characters of Europe I introduced, in their most natural and obvious order. I wished, as far as I was able, to give every thing its proper place. The last period is much longer than the rest; but the reader will see, from the dearth of matter I labored under in regard to the life of Heloisa, that it could not otherwise be disposed.

Before I began my work, I wrote, in the most polite manner, to the abbess of the Paraclet, requesting if she had any materials, which hitherto had not seen the light, that she would favor me with them; and at the same time, I offered, with as much gallantry as I thought was due to a venerable abbess, to dedicate the work to her Ladyship. She has taken no notice of my letter. Probably she thought I was a heretic, with whom it might be impious to co-operate (for I omitted to mention the circumstance of my orthodoxy); or, which is most likely, she did not wish her name should appear at the head of a work, which, she might

think, would be rather a romance, than a serious history. However, I can assure the reader, that the abbey of the Paraclet possesses no records, of the least moment, which have not, long ago, been before the public. Amboise, he has seen, rummaged every shelf of their library.

I have subjoined a translation of the celebrated *letters*, with the originals themselves, as given by Amboise & Gervaise. An edition of them was published in England, some years ago, which I have not seen. In other countries of Europe, as in this, various supposed translations of the letters have been circulated, which the gay and idle may have read with pleasure; but they bear no resemblance to the original. They are the effusions of fancy, and not designed either to delineate the characters of the lovers, or to promote the cause of virtue. It was such a translation, I believe, which Mr. Pope had seen. His poem, with fear and trembling, I have dared gently to criticize. As to my own translation I feel for it no parental fondness: it gives, I hope, the sense of the authors; and to that only I pretend. I do not possess that toiling and patient steadiness, which constitutes

a good translator. — Some passages I have curtailed, and omitted others: the Latin, which is entire, will suggest the motive.

My work I now submit to the public with all its imperfections. Where it merits praise, it will find it; and where it should be censured, let censure freely fall. I know not what right the productions of the pen have to plead an exemption from blemishes, to which the fairest forms of nature are sometimes liable: but as candor will view these with indulgence, so will it the former. Wilfully I have not meant to bring a slovenly and unformed work before the public; and its unavoidable defects must be forgiven.

My history breaks off at a most brilliant and important epoch. It is, when Henry Plantagenet had just mounted the throne of England, when his dissensions were soon to begin with Becket, when Frederick Barbarossa was in Germany, when Alexander III. was at Rome, and when the general aspect of Europe seemed to promise events, great and interesting. The period has already been ably treated; but should the public favor encourage me, *perhaps* I may be tempted again to

review it, though a noble lord, narrative from age and unfair from prejudice, may be thought to have exhausted the subject. A Roman Catholic writer, attached to his religion, but unshackled in his thoughts, and free in his expressions, is, in this country, rather a new character in the republic of letters. My abilities, alas! cannot keep pace with my wishes.

Oscott, near Birmingham,
December 31, 1786.

THE

INTRODUCTION.

IT has often been objected to historians, that; whatever period of ancient or of modern times they might chuse to describe, they generally enter on the subject with a bias of strong prepossession on their minds. Certain characters they will be sure to delineate, with too partial a fondness; while others will not have the common praise to which they may justly pretend. Alike unfair will be their survey of manners, events, opinions, conduct. I believe, there is too much truth in the charge. In revolving even the transactions of distant times, the mind is never abstracted from its own peculiar inclinations. These are followed in the first selection of the subject, and their influence does not afterwards cease. Naturally we admire those characters, which may seem in something to harmonize with our own, or which education, and habits of thought, may have taught us to admire. National dispositions also, and religious

preventions, and systems of policy, come in aid of the leading motives, and give, besides, a determined cast to the general view. The historian sees with his own eyes, and feels, in every description, the emotions which are analogous to the temper of his soul.

It should seem, however, in describing the times which I have chosen, that there can be nothing sufficiently interesting to excite this undue predilection. The feelings of the reader are seldom those of the writer. I have chosen, indeed, the *dark ages*, those times, which it has long been the fashion to depreciate; over which ignorance is thought to have spread the dark mantle of barbarism and superstition, under which few traces can be found which the improved and enlightened minds of these days can survey undisgusted. The judgment is unequitable. I will not say that there was not much darkness; but also there were many rays, dispersed on characters, and beaming from events, which the less fastidious historian can collect and view with pleasure. The darkness was the necessary effect of causes which, in every circumstance, were organized to produce it.

View of the
eleventh cen-
tury.

The Goths, the Huns, the Vandals, the Franks, the Burgundians, and the Lombards, had descended, like clouds of locusts, from the north, and proudly fixed their iron thrones on the ruins of the western world. Triumphant in their

strength, they despised the puny nations they had easily subdued. Arms and the animating sports of the field could alone gain their attention. To them the arts were an unmanly occupation, and as they knew nothing of science, it even sank lower in their estimation. The manners and taste of the ruling party are soon communicated to the other orders of society. These even will desert every former pursuit, and throw off the character they before esteemed, the better to conciliate the favor, and to make their way to the notice, of their new masters. Thus did the people, whom the barbarians had conquered, soon themselves become barbarous; the pursuits of science languished; and the powers of reason, for a time disused, seemed to have lost their native energy.

But as this disposition of things, from the natural instability of man, could not long continue, so did science soon revive, and the arts of peace were cultivated. Indeed, even in the worst moments, they were not utterly extinguished, as we know from the annals of the times. But in speaking of events, a general view only can be exhibited. I said that science soon revived, and with it the arts. In their revival they are but little superior to the imperfection of their first growth: languid, tardy, and elementary. Even in the eleventh century, the period I have chosen, when the new kingdoms were

firmly established, the view of society is often uninviting, and sometimes disgusting from its barbarous and unenlightened character. But perhaps too severe a prepossession had engaged the judgment. When I consider the enlarged minds and the virtuous endowments of some men, who then lived, I am inclined to think it. The reader will determine.

About the fifteenth century, when the more elegant productions of antiquity began to be more generally read, to decry the monkish writers was deemed a proof of great discernment. Their language, indeed, was barbarous, compared with better models; but I would rather read a monkish composition, of which at least the ideas are sometimes original, than the works of those fastidious critics. Affectedly imitative of Ciceronean elegance, they are vapid and disgusting. But we ourselves have been led away by the puerile judgment of the men, I allude to. We do not sufficiently reflect that, in the dark ages, even the most cultivated mind must have wanted language with which to clothe his ideas. Latin had long ceased to be spoken, and the modern tongues of Europe were as yet barren and unexpressive. They wrote in Latin. What judgment, let me ask, would posterity form of the classical elegance, at least, even of these times, if modern authors were tied down to the use only of the dead languages? I know

not that the editor of Bellendenus, whom some admire, could promise to himself a never-fading wreath of glory. Yet for these four hundred years, have the ages which preceded them been principally despised, because the language of their authors was rude and unharmonious.

Another circumstance has contributed to strengthen the unfavorable impression. When the Reformation began, in the sixteenth century, it was thought necessary to justify the measure by every plausible pretext. It was owing to the darkness in which the world had been involved, they said, that error had so successfully made its way, and had sapped the foundations of religious truth. In all their writings the first reformers dwell on this idea. The more gloomy the representation can be made, the more expedient becomes their work, and the greater success would attend their endeavours. Success did attend them; and their successors in the ministry have not been less sedulous to keep alive the same impression on the minds of the people. There was truth in the general view; but the deep coloring seemed sometimes to disguise its strongest features.

I mean not to write the apology of the dark ages; but I will take a short survey of the eleventh century, which may serve to introduce my reader to the period I have described in the following history.

Greek
Schism.

Now was the Greek completely severed from the Latin church, by the industry and bold perseverance of Michael Cerularius, patriarch of Constantinople. Photius, in the ninth century, had begun the schism, a man of talents and of vast learning, but ambitious in design, adulatory in address, and intemperate in every project. Michael was disposed to accomplish the work which his predecessor, whose memory he revered, had opened, and he had abilities for it. Long had the patriarchs of Constantinople arrogated to themselves the splendid title of *universal bishop*, a pretension which the Roman pontiffs had strenuously opposed. The understanding between the two churches had seldom been cordial. There were always sufficient subjects to create jealousies and animosity. They now broke out with unusual rancor. The eastern patriarch brought forward his charges against the Latin church. They were trivial, and could not justify the division he projected; but the effect answered his most sanguine hopes. His accusations were, that the Latins in their sacrifice used unleavened bread; that they ate of strangled meats; that they did not sing alleluia in Lent; and that sometimes they fasted on Saturdays. Such charges hardly merited a serious reply. The pope, however, Leo IX, was irritated; and the intemperance of his conduct, which his ministers did

but aggravate, gave an air of equity to measures which were assumed in levity and ambition. To overthrow most effectually the extravagant pretensions of Cerularius, Leo dares to produce his own: "Know," says he, "that my sovereignty reaches to heaven, and extends over all the kingdoms of the earth." The Greek was not convinced; and from that moment the fatal schism was signed, which no efforts have been since able to repair¹.

The wealth of the church had, through a long succession of years, been increasing, and with it the temporal power and influence of its ministers. They were possessed of domains and principalities. The two jurisdictions, which in their own natures are essentially distinct, became thus confounded, and the pastor of the flock was the lord of the people. Rome, from the days of Constantine, had grown rich and powerful. The piety of some, the liberality of others, and the mistaken zeal of more, had continually added to its possessions. But from the moment it became customary for the pope to crown the western emperor, the prerogatives of his see arose to an immeasurable magnitude. He that could give a diadem, it was said, possessed a power above him who bowed his head to receive it. The princes themselves, whose interest it often was, contributed by their submission to strengthen

Western
church.

¹ Fleury, &c.

the illusion. It was, in this century, as will be seen, that the power of Rome was in its greatest altitude.

Accustomed to view Europe in its present state, when general interest, in spite of political dissensions, is made a bond of union, the retrospect into times when nations stood alone, is cold and uninteresting. I can therefore look to Rome, with real satisfaction, when with propriety it might be called the centre of civil union. It connected kingdoms, it swayed their interests, it controuled the abuse of power, it received appeals from the oppressed, it awed the vicious, it distributed justice, it strengthened and gave rewards to virtue.

The popes of this century (I mean as far as Gregory VII.) were not men of great abilities or of great virtues. I must except Leo IX. and Alexander II. The first of these had high endowments. Incessantly he labored to reform the vices of the church; he assembled councils, and he opposed the spreading torrent of simony and incontinence. He travelled much, striving every where to re-establish discipline, and to correct abuses. To the fervor of his zeal corresponded the innocence of his own life. He was the father of the poor, and the refuge of the miserable,

and he spent his days in penitence, prayer, and good works. This was the fair side of Leo. In his conduct towards the patriarch of Constantinople and his abettors, he was less mild, less forbearing, and less prudent. But when a party of Norman marauders had entered Italy, and plundered his territories, the pontiff would not brook the daring insult. He collected an army, and marched at their head. In a pitched battle his forces were defeated, and himself was taken prisoner. The conquerors treated the venerable captive with the greatest respect; but they detained him. He died in their hands². — The courtly annalist, Baronius, is offended that this action of Leo should have been censured as contrary to christian meekness, and he justifies it by the allegory of the two swords.

It is remarkable that Leo, in his letter to Cerularius, which I mentioned, reproaches the Greeks with having raised a woman to the patriarchate of Constantinople. This he would not have done, had the adventures of pope Joan been then known. Modern sagacity, however, has discovered that the event happened in the ninth century, near two hundred years before Leo.

Benedict VIII. had also exhibited a spirit, equally martial and magnanimous. The Saracens landed

² Baron. Annal. ad an. 1053.

in Tuscany, and pushing on their conquests, threatened the gates of Rome. The pontiff assembled his bishops and the champions of the church, when it was resolved instantly to attack the enemy. The pope marched. At the same time a fleet was ordered to be out at sea to intercept their retreat. The infidels were routed, and not a man is said to have escaped the sword. The prince of the Saracens, whom this overthrow of his people had exasperated, and whose queen had lost her head by the pontiff's order, sent to Benedict a sack full of chestnuts, signifying by his messenger, that, the next spring, he would land as many soldiers, on the shores of Italy. "Take," said the pope, "this purse of millet back to your master; it will tell him the number of my brave men who shall meet him at his landing".

My motive in relating these anecdotes is to show, what was the spirit of the age; and to suggest the reflection, that, even virtuous characters are sometimes composed of very extraordinary materials.

As the tiara was become an object of more ambition, than the imperial crown, it was often fought for by men, whom the lust of power only instigated to mount the sacred chair. Factions were formed to support the candidates. Thus, in 1033, was elected Benedict IX, a youth

¹ Baron. Annal.

of twelve years, who disgraced the holy office by a life of infamy⁴. — Without the miraculous intervention of providence the evil was inevitable. Good men lamented it; but they seemed not sufficiently to know what the means were which could alone prevent its repetition. They should have divested the holy see of that power and external pageantry, which were its irresistible allurements. In the brightest ages of the church, the popes of Rome were the pastors only of the people. The days are returning to us.

I find, at this time, in the church of Europe, many learned and virtuous bishops. While war, with its concomitant evils, disturbed the peace of society, to their courts retired the studious and gentle-minded, and they found protection in them. They cultivated the sciences, imperfect as they were, and they tutored the youth to virtue. Their piety, though not always enlightened, was sincere, and to the duties of religion they dedicated their lives. From the nature of the feudal compact, which now prevailed, the bishops were bound to martial service. Many served in person; such was the character of the age: while others were satisfied to send their contingent of men and horses, at the summons of their lord. A bishop, accoutred for the field, and marching at the head of his vassals, was no uncommon sight. The frowning helmet, he thought, became him better, than the gairish

⁴ Baron. An.

mitre. Fatal to the spirit of ecclesiastical discipline was this preposterous arrangement⁵.

Many new convents were now formed, and discipline was restored to others. They also became asylums to science and to virtue. The piety and fervent zeal of the first ages seemed to revive. The effect was generally felt, and the profligacy of the times was powerfully counter-acted⁶.—I wish the reader to be sensible that to many objects there is a fair and a foul side. If I dwell with most pleasure on the first, is my taste reprehensible? But to this taste, I would not sacrifice the smallest element of truth.

Political state
of Europe.

In the political world there is much to survey, could my limits allow it.—Henry, the Second of the name, was Emperor in Germany. The historians of the age are lavish in his praises; for never had the church a better friend. He was a father also to his people, and his patriotism and martial prowess were as celebrated as his piety. His devotion to the holy see was unbounded. With Cunegundis, his queen, he went to Rome, where from the hand of Benedict VIII. they received the imperial crown. Baronius remarks that, no one was then called Emperor, who had not submitted to this ceremony. It was thus performed. Henry, surrounded by twelve Roman senators, of whom six were shaved, and

⁵ Fleury, disc. 3.

⁶ Ibid.

fix wore long beards, with slaves in their hands, proceeded to the church of St. Peter. Cunegundis was by his side. The pope waited in the porch. He here asked the king, if he would ever defend the Roman see, and bear true allegiance to himself and successors. Henry bowed assent. They were then introduced; both were anointed, and both received a crown from the hand of the pontiff. The same day they supped with Benedict in the Lateran palace⁷. — Henry then, by an ample diploma, confirmed to the Roman see all its ancient privileges, and the donations which his predecessors had made of the sovereignty of Rome and the exarchate of Ravenna.

The western empire, which had been extinguished in Augustulus, was restored in the ninth century, in the person of Charlemagne, king of France, who extended his conquests into part of Spain, and into Italy, and Flanders, and Germany, and part of Hungary. The imperial crown continued in the different branches of his family. But as the emperors, to indulge their favorites, or compelled by circumstances, had erected many petty sovereigns in their states, these grew powerful; and on the death of Lewis IV. in 912, they declared that the imperial dignity had devolved on the Germanic body. Conrad, duke of Franconia, was therefore

⁷ Ditm. in Baron.

electèd emperor, to whom succeeded Henry I. duke of Saxony, the ancestor of the Henry, I have mentioned. His successor was Conrad II.

St. Stephen, the first king of Hungary, and its apostle, is another prince, with whose praises the histories of the age resound. And, as far as we can judge, he was deserving of them. Early in his reign, when he was but duke of Hungary, he sent an ambassador to Rome to procure from his holiness the confirmation of the pious foundations he had made, and of the bishoprics he had erected; and, at the same time, to request that he would confer on him the title of king. The pope approved of all his measures, and presented him with a rich crown, which had been designed for the brows of Miceſlas, duke of Poland. The motives for this preference were cogent. Stephen, by his ambassador, had submitted his kingdom to the protection of the holy see *.

Having converted his people to christianity, and civilized their barbarous manners, his next care was to make them happy. He established an excellent code, which, at this day, is the basis of the laws of Hungary, and he attended to their execution. He was a saint and a legislator. He was also a warrior; and the success of his arms corresponded with the equity of his cause. Under him Hungary became a great and flourishing

* Baron.

nation, and his memory is still held in the warmest veneration, by that brave and independent people.

In France reigned Robert, and after him Henry I. his son. Robert was an amiable, a beneficent, a pious, and a learned prince. He had married Birtha, his cousin, which drew on him the severest censures of the church. While under the sentence of excommunication, two servants only were permitted to approach his person; and as every thing which he touched was polluted, they were careful to burn, or to pass through a flame, the cups and dishes which were used at his table. To this the king submitted; but he would not surrender his wife. In the mean time, Birtha was delivered of a child, with the head and neck of a goose, says a contemporary writer*. Robert relinquished her, and married Constance of Arles, a turbulent and headstrong woman.

From an interview between himself and the Emperor Henry, we may collect the disinterested and pious spirit of the age. They met on the banks of the Moselle. After the business of the congress had been amicably adjusted, Robert presented his imperial friend with a hundred horses richly caparisoned, each carrying a complete suit of armour and a helmet. These Henry refused.

* Pet. Damia.

But from among other magnificent gifts, which lay before him, he chose a book of the gospels, highly ornamented, and a casket containing the tooth of St. Vincent. Robert, the next day, showed an equal disinterestedness. From a hundred weight of pure gold he took only a pair of ear-rings, which were then worn by men, or as some translate it, two vessels for his table^o.—He is said to have been the first king of France who touched for the *evil*.

In the reign of the next prince, an expert warrior and a prudent statesman, we read of little else but dissensions and battles. Then began the violent contests between the crown and the dukedom of Normandy. Robert, the second of the name, with a holy enthusiasm, departing for Jerusalem, left his dominions to his natural son, William, a youth of nine years. The little hero was opposed by his own vassals, and the king, with many powerful princes, soon combined against him. He triumphed over them, learning in the field and in the cabinet, the maxims of policy and the energy of action, which in a few years would exalt him to the English throne.

Of England, during this period, the history is well known. It comprises the reign of Ethelred, with the melancholy recital of the Danish incursions, and the final submission of the country to

^o Glaber, apud Baron.

the invaders. Then reigned Canute, a great and wise monarch; and Harold and Hardicanute, his sons, for nothing commendable, but for agility and strength of body. In Edward, the confessor, who succeeded, we again find a prince, whom historians have praised without measure. He was humane, just, and pious, and his people loved him; but he wanted vigor and capacity. The prosperity of his reign owed less to his abilities, than to the conjunctures of the times. His want of children proved fatal to the Saxon line.

At what other time, in the annals of Europe, shall we find such a knot of kings as these? But while they were laboring to extend justice, or to humanize their people, or to propagate, what they conceived to be, the best maxims of religion and truth, a new kingdom was forming on the Italian shore. Tancred, a noble Norman, lord of Hauteville, with his twelve sons, and a gallant army of adventurers, left their country, in 1008, and landing in Apulia, soon expelled the Saracens, and the Greeks their confederates. Success attended their future operations, though cruelty and injustice too often marked their progress. From this time the Normans became dukes of Calabria, and counts and dukes of Apulia. Robert Guiscard, the boldest Norman of them all, augmented his power by the conquest of Sicily, Naples, and all the lands which lie between that city and the territory of

I INTRODUCTION.

Rome. Roger, his son, was saluted by the pope, king of both the Sicilies ¹¹.

Robert Guiscard had given his daughter, Helena, in marriage to Constantine, son of Michael Ducas, emperor of Constantinople. Michael being dethroned by Nicephorus, his son and daughter were cast into prison. The insult roused the Norman hero, and he marched towards the east at the head of fifteen thousand men. In the mean time, Alexius Comnenus had usurped the imperial throne. Guiscard continued his march, when in Albania he was met by Alexius. The imperial army was a hundred and fifty thousand strong. Robert viewed the mighty host, and prepared for battle. On his knees he spent two watches of the night with his army, and with the rising sun attacked the enemy. They were routed, and fled in confusion. Success attended his other operations, and he fixed his eye on the throne of Constantinople. But disturbances in the west called him away to support his friend, Gregory VII. against the attacks of the German Henry.

The history of Spain, at this time, is too complicated and too romantic, to afford matter for serious discussion. The authors are many, but their violent attachment to the Spanish cause, and their hatred to the Moors, had rendered them blind to impartial truth. Yet, abstracting from

¹¹ Baron.

religion, we well know on which side lay science, and the arts which can ennoble and embellish human nature.

As to the writers of the age, in general, I know not what to say. Their compositions, as far as Learning and manners. may be concluded from extracts, are not always inelegant; nor are they void of accuracy, in historical narration. Their commentaries on scripture, and their controversial writings, only that they point out the religious tenets of the time, have little merit, to us at least, who can recur to better models. But it is the credulity of their best writers, ever dwelling on miracles and legendary tales, which gives surprise. On other occasions they seem to have been men, not void of judgment and perspicuous sense. It is a problem not easy to be solved. Could we transport ourselves back to their times, and seize the association of ideas which had occupied their minds, we might discover how they saw and reasoned. It was the natural effect of circumstances, which then no superior sense or better organization could have surmounted. Man is a part of the general system which time rolls on, and is subject to its laws. They were as wise as they could be; and if we are wiser, it is, because a new order of things has risen to our view. The time will arrive, when this age also may be denominated dark; and who knows, but they may say, we were *credulous*? Our

ancestors, I doubt not, thought themselves as little under the influence of prejudice and idle fancy, as we may deem ourselves; and to speak equitably, agreeably to the idea I suggested, can it be said, that they were deceived?

The ordeal-trials, by boiling water, or red-hot iron, were now in great use. In vain had councils by their canons, and popes by their decrees, attempted to suppress them. The superstitious obstinacy of the age could not be controuled. Yet if we can at all rely on accounts, which come down to us with all the air of authenticity, it must be owned that the event of these trials was sometimes truly wonderful. In 1067, were great dissensions in Florence between the bishop and the people. They accused him of having obtained their see by simoniacal practices. The monks of a neighbouring convent supported the accusation. The bishop denied the charge. In this state of indecision, which no ordinary process could then terminate, the monks offered to verify their accusation by the trial of fire. The bold challenge was applauded by the people, and they assembled round the convent. Two piles of wood were raised, ten feet long, five feet wide, and four feet high. A space of six feet separated the piles, which was also covered with combustible materials. A young monk, named Peter, came forward.

He had been chosen for the awful ceremony, and he was habited in his priestly vestments. By order of his abbot he then advanced to the altar, and began the service of the day. The people, silent and in dread expectation, waited round the altar. Towards the close of the sacrifice, four monks came down to set fire to the piles. They carried in their hands twelve lighted torches. In an instant the piles were in a blaze. Peter, having finished the service, advanced towards the fires, bearing a cross in his hand, and singing with the choir as he advanced. Silence being made, the conditions of the trial were read to the people. They applauded with loud acclamations, and called on heaven to support its own cause.

By this time the piles were nearly reduced to glowing embers; when Peter, standing at a small distance, pronounced, with a firm voice, the following prayer: "Lord Jesus," said he, "if Peter of Pavia has usurped by simony the see of Florence, succour me, I beseech thee, in this tremendous trial, and save me from this fire, as thou didst preserve the three children in the burning furnace." So saying he embraced his brethren; and the people were asked, how long they chose, he should remain in the fire? Let him but pass slowly through it, said they.—He fixed his eyes on the cross, and with a gay countenance slowly entered the burning passage. His feet

were bare. For a time he was invisible in the smoke; but he soon appeared, on the other side, safe and uninjured. The flame seemed gently to move his hair, and his linen garments floated lightly on the current: but not even the hairs on his legs were singed. The people crowded round him; fell at his feet, and called him their deliverer and the friend of heaven¹². — The bishop confessed his guilt and was deposed.

The account is abridged from the letter which the clergy and people of Florence wrote to the pope on the occasion; and its truth is attested by the historians of the age. Peter was afterwards made a cardinal and bishop of Albano. He acquired the name of *igneus*.

I could mention many similar events, but none so splendid as this. Our philosophers, versed in the chymistry of nature, will account for the phenomenon. To me it seems, that heaven, propitious to the good intentions and simplicity of the age, might sometimes perhaps thus visibly announce itself, to excite a just horror of crimes, which by their frequency had ceased to be regarded. I cannot, at least, subscribe to that fastidious criticism, which rejects every fact as fabulous, that does not square with the measure of modern maxims and theories.

¹² Baron, Fleury.

The virtues of the eleventh century were valor and devotion, (if the former can pretend to the name,) and its vices were cruelty, superstition, and intemperance. The transition from one to the other is easy, and the alliance natural. Valor, where education does not check its exuberance, runs out to ferocity; and devotion, unallayed by reason, is the parent of superstition. Intemperance must be found, where, in a society not restrained by the rules of decorum, the grosser passions have the first claim to indulgence. But where valor is, there will be a certain dignity of character, supported by generosity, by honor, and a contempt of what is base and mercenary. When devotion mixes with valor, it causes an enthusiasm, which no dangers or difficulties can intimidate.

In many characters of the age I find these virtues, and near them might all the vices be likewise found: they grew naturally from the soil. But the reader has seen men, in whom was virtue unfulfilled by any vice. On the throne he saw just and virtuous monarchs; in the field brave and generous warriors; in the church zealous and charitable bishops; and in the common walks of life there were men, emulous to copy the virtues they admired in their superiors.

From the above sketch, the manners of the people may be easily traced. Their valor would

be brutality, and their devotion would be superstition. It is the natural gradation. In those two features is portrayed the strong outline of the eleventh century. — I said, I did not mean to apologize for its faults, or to blazon its virtues. There is a temperate and tranquil medium through which objects are seen in their true proportions. Through that medium I strove to direct my sight; and if I have succeeded, I have prepared a proper *Introduction* to the following history.

C O N T E N T S

O F T H E

F I R S T V O L U M E.

B O O K I.

Abeillard's birth and education—He travels and comes to Paris — State of learning — He studies under Champeaux, and quarrels — Teaches at Melun and Corbeil — Subjects in debate — He falls sick, and retires — Returns to Paris — Contends with de Champeaux and triumphs — Goes again into Britany — Resolves to study theology—Gregory VII. pope — State of France — State of England — The first crusade.

PAGE 1 — 70

B O O K II.

Abeillard goes to Laon and studies under Anselm — Returns to Paris and teaches. — Heloisa —Abeillard becomes her master — She escapes with him into Britany — He offers to marry her — They are married — He conveys her to Argenteuil — Fulbert's revenge — Pascal II. pope — France and England — Religious orders — Cluni — The Chartreuse — Fontevraud.

PAGE 71 — 109

CONTENTS.

BOOK III.

Distress of Abeillard — Heloisa hears the news — Hard fate of Fulbert — Abeillard proposes to Heloisa to quit the world — She is professed a nun — Abeillard becomes a monk at St. Denys — He resumes his lectures — Is cited before the council of Soissons — Is confined at St. Medard — Returns to St. Denys — Escapes in the night. — Reflections.

PAGE 135 — 194

BOOK IV.

The count of Champagne protects Abeillard — The story of Stephen de Garlande — Abeillard retires into the forest of Nogent — He is visited in the forest, and again begins to teach — He builds the Paraclet — Norbert of Premontré — Bernard of Clairvaux — Miracles — Abeillard is chosen abbot of St. Gildas — Argenteuil taken from the nuns — Heloisa goes to Paraclet — Abeillard is again censured — He fixes at St. Gildas, and is persecuted by his monks.

PAGE 195 — 252

THE
HISTORY
OF THE LIVES OF
ABEILLARD and HELOISA.
BOOK I.

His birth and education — He travels, and comes to Paris — State of learning — He studies under Champeaux and quarrels — Teaches at Melun and Corbeil — Subjects in debate — He falls sick and retires — Returns to Paris — Contends with de Champeaux and triumphs — Goes again into Britany — Resolves to study theology — Gregory VII. Pope. — State of France — State of England — The first crusade.

Anno, 1079.

PETER ABEILLARD was born in the village of Palais, four leagues from Nantes, in Little Britany, towards the close of the eleventh century, in the year 1079¹. His father's name was Berenger, a gentleman of noble descent, and Abeil lardis

BOOK

I.

His birth and education.

¹ Hist. Calam.

BOOK thought to have been the eldest of many children.

- I. Berenger, before he entered the army, had been early instructed in the elements of such learning as the age had to supply, and he ever after retained a fondness for letters: he was careful therefore that, in the education of his children, whilst their bodies were formed to arms, the more excellent culture of their minds should not be neglected. The church or arms were then the only fashionable professions of gentlemen, and, with the addition of the law, the same continues to be the taste of all polite nations to the present day.

Abeillard came into the world with the happiest dispositions: his mind, gentle as the air of Britany, and fertile as its soil, was open to all the impressions of literary discipline. So he speaks of himself ². — Fable relates (for there was a time when the birth of every great man was attended by some marvellous circumstance) that his mother had sure forebodings of his future eloquence, and therefore from the bee, called him Abeillard: she saw honey falling from his lips ³. — Being his father's favorite, his education was more sedulously guarded; and very soon such fast hold had the love of letters taken of his mind, that they became the ruling passion of his life. Destined to arms, he lost all relish for the pursuits of that

² Hist. Calam. ³ Vie d'Abeil.

brilliant and seductive profession, and he resigned his inheritance, with all the rights of primogeniture, to his younger brothers. "At the feet of Minerva, says he, I sacrificed all the military pomp which blazes round the car of the God of War *."

But what were the charms, which, at that gloomy period of fallen science, could have power to captivate the ardent mind of Abeillard? To judge from his writings, he was not unacquainted with the best authors of the purest age of Roman literature; them, under his father's eye, he had probably made his favorite pursuit; and these studies, as they had ornamented his mind, so had they prepared him to enter on a new career, in which alone, at that time, the aspiring ambition of youth could meet an object ample enough to satisfy its desires.

Philosophy, or more properly that branch of it, which is termed logic, or the art of disputation, was then rising into renown; and that our young scholar might have every advantage, which could be given him, of being thoroughly initiated into its various arts, he was put under the tuition of Roscelin, the acutest logician of the age †. — Roscelin, less skilled in theology, than in the subtilties of his art, brought himself, some years

* Hist. Calam. † Præf. Apologet.

BOOK I. after, into great trouble, on account of the very singular notions he had introduced into the mysterious doctrine of the Trinity. He was a Tritheist. For this he was condemned in the council of Compiègne, 1092 *.

Under so able a master, Abeillard, it is not to be doubted, made a rapid advance: the study was well adapted to his genius: acute and penetrating, he would eagerly devote himself to inquiries, which opened to his view an extensive scene, that seemed to call all the powers of his soul into action, and where he could promise to himself at once the display of abilities, and the glory of conquest.—The victories of the schools had then their charms, as soothing perhaps to vanity as were those of the field, and surely they were more innocent. The laurels, indeed, which wreathed the brows of the literary champion, were not, in the eye of the multitude, so awfully dignified, but they drew very general admiration, nor were they sullied with a single drop of human blood.

Having thus provided for the future reputation of his son, in a manner which seemed to ensure his success, Berenger withdrew from the noisy scene of arms, to the retirement of a convent. — The cloister was then the usual retreat of men, whom either disappointment had disgusted of the

* Fleyur, vol. xiii.

world, or indolence rendered unfit for its active pursuits. It was likewise an asylum, to which religion or the gentle voice of humanity called many, who looked with horror on the enormities of a barbarous and warlike age. Kings were seen to resign their crowns for the monkish cowl, and the walls of the convents thronged with inhabitants of all ages, and of every sex and condition. Abuses and great crimes were the necessary consequence of this promiscuous assemblage of men: but, at the times I am describing, the worst excesses of the cloistered life were but puny evils when compared with the rapines, the murders, the extortions, which, with impunity, were practised on the great theatre of the world.

From his cell, Berenger thought to view, in undisturbed repose, the splendid career of his son Abeillard; nor were his expectations frustrated. The young man had hardly reached his sixteenth year, but he felt himself sufficiently strong to rely on his own exertions, and he quitted his masters, whose instructions, as he had little more to learn from them, could only retard the expansion of his mind'. — When, by proper discipline, the youthful character has been sometime habituated to the forms of order and of classic rule, it should be left to itself; it will take its own bent, and prosper best.

He travels,
and comes to
Paris.

⁷ Vic d'Abeil.

BOOK

I.

Britany could no longer satisfy his wishes; he withdrew therefore from his native country, and with an ardor, which showed the great desire he had of improvement, he rapidly ran over the neighbouring provinces, in quest of science*. — In this, he proposed to himself the example of those ancient philosophers, whose lives he had read, and whom he thought it glorious to imitate. Over their minds the love of wisdom held an unbounded control. “ I emulated, ” says he, the fame of the peripatetic school, and in whatever “ quarter, I was told, the study of philosophy “ was pursued, thither I went, that no sources “ of science might be hidden from me”. — But when the provincial schools had nothing more to give, Abeillard turned his eyes to Paris; where he arrived about the last year of the eleventh century, and in the twentieth year of his age.

State of
Learning.

The schools of Paris, for more than a century, had been rising to a great reputation, and they were now become the general mart of science, to which resorted scholars from all the kingdoms of Europe". The circumstance of its being the principal residence of the French monarchs contributed not a little to give it celebrity, and to draw to it the ablest masters. — Since the revival of knowledge in the western empire, under the auspicious eye of Charlemagne, in the eighth

* Hist. Cal.

* Ib.

** Fleury, Dupin, &c.

century, the greatest monarch perhaps that ever B O O K
 swayed the sceptre, and whom the warrior, the I.
 man of letters, and the christian might call his
 friend, the French nation had taken the lead in
 the progress of the arts of literature. Yet when
 compared with the rapid descent, by which the
 human mind, from the height of science and
 polished life, is hurried into ignorance and barba-
 rism, how slow and almost imperceptible is the
 return it makes even to the first dawnings of the
 new day, which, in the revolutions of states and
 kingdoms, is sometimes destined to rise upon us!

Alcuin, the luminary of a dark age, whom Bri-
 tain gave to Charlemagne to be his instructor and
 his guide, had traced out the lines, by which,
 he thought, science might be the soonest restored.
 These rules had been carefully pursued, and
 though they had led to no splendid improvements,
 yet the fault lay not so much in the method, as
 in the tardy constitution of the human mind. He
 had recommended to begin by orthography (a
 necessary preliminary, undoubtedly, when even
 the Emperor himself was unable to write his own
 name;) to this was to succeed the study of gram-
 mar, of rhetoric, and lastly of philosophy, in its
 three branches, of logic, morals, and nature: but
 logic, or what I have already more properly cal-

BOOK I. led, the art of disputation, was the only portion of that divine science, which was thought worthy to engross the attention of literary ambition²¹.

The rules of grammar, which, in every country, should be primarily applied to its native tongue, were then solely directed to the study of the Latin language; though Latin had ceased to be spoken, and all the infant tongues of Europe were in a state of the lowest barbarism. Nor yet was this privileged tongue itself raised to any degree of classical perfection. So true is it, that the arts and sciences, in their most minute ramifications, keep an exact pace with the ebbs and flows of human nature. — Rhetoric they also studied; but it was a rhetoric which taught them to depart from the noble simplicity of truth, and in its stead to substitute an affected jargon of language, and a whimsical display of metaphorical figures. The writings of Alcuin himself attest the justness of these observations. — Nor was their famous logic, which attracted the attention of the admiring world, a jot more valuable. It was no longer, what it had been, under its first masters, in the schools of Greece, the art of accurate reasoning, whereby truth was discovered, and its bounds enlarged, by

²¹ Fleury, Dupin, &c.

an easy process, an error was detected; but now it consisted in the mere exercise of disputation, in the subtle arrangement of unmeaning terms, which clouded reason, and enveloped truth. Applause and not instruction was the object of the masters; and he was the greatest adept who, by captious quibbles, could distress his adversary the most ¹².

As the mind was thus bewildered in a maze of sophistry, so was the real science of man and of nature utterly neglected. They knew nothing of the mechanical powers of the world, and every uncommon appearance was considered as a certain presage of extraordinary events: they ascribed them to mystic or to moral causes. — Their ethics ran out into idle speculations, into definitions and divisions of vice and virtue, whilst practical documents and the high duties of life were little regarded. — The important business of criticism, to which modern times are indebted for all they possess, in the line of scientific improvement, was equally unknown as the ways of nature. Fables they received as genuine facts, and the more extraordinary an event was, the greater was its claim to credibility ¹³.

But schools were opened, and monasteries were also founded, wherein instruction was gratuitously distributed, and the crowds of scholars, who

¹² Fleury, Dupin, &c.

¹³ Fleury, disc. 5.

BOOK attended, were numerous beyond belief. It seemed
I. as if the mind of man, tired out in the horrid scenes of bloodshed, which had so long disgraced the annals of Europe, were returning to juster notions, and that a new order of things were preparing to rise. And so it was; but the great event was as yet distant, in the way to which lay a long and dreary chasm of more than four hundred years.

Paris, I have said, was the great centre of all the knowledge which the eleventh century could boast of, and to this theatre I had conducted my young philosopher. His heart, doubtless beat with quicker pulsations, when he entered those walls, which were soon to attest his triumphs, and which had long been the object of his ardent wishes.

He studies
under Cham-
peaux and
quarrels.

Among the masters, whose reputation was great in the schools, William de Champeaux was the most eminent. Contemporary writers speak highly of his abilities and of his virtues, and he was deeply versed, they tell us, and well exercised in all the arts of the dialectic discipline¹¹. As with painful emulation he had risen to the highest honors in his profession, so was he jealous of the same he had acquired, and feared the most distant rival. The lessons of this man Abeillard

¹¹ Quercet. Notæ

frequented, and he was much pleased with the choice he had made. His fluency of language and the acuteness of his reasoning, seemed to throw new charms over his favorite art. In animation of spirit, he soon began to skirmish with the foremost of the scholars, and sometimes he dared to question even de Champeaux himself¹⁵. The veteran was delighted with the prompt character of his disciple, and augured to himself a fresh increase of fame from the exertion of abilities, which, he flattered himself, he should soon be able to draw out in the support of his own opinions.

In these dispositions of mutual benevolence, from which the youthful mind of Abeillard pictured to itself scenes of future happiness, a commerce of friendship began, and he was taken to board into the house of his master. From this circumstance, as he had more frequent opportunities of improvement, so might he soon learn that de Champeaux was not a hero at all times; and the blaze of glory which had seemed to surround him among the plaudits of his scholars, insensibly vanished when viewed with a familiar eye. He began to suspect that this wide-spreading tree was perhaps rather loaded with leaves than fruit. — The stripling now walked with a bolder step into the schools: he dared publicly to contend with

¹⁵ Hist. Calam.

B O O K Champeaux; he attacked, in serious language
I. some even of his most favored opinions; he repeated these attacks daily with more petulance; and sometimes, says he, I seemed to feel a superiority in argument¹⁶. — The eye of the philosopher looked benevolence no longer; confused, angry, mortified, he left his seat; and Abeillard was soon obliged to provide himself with another establishment.

Nor was it de Champeaux alone who felt this galling humiliation: many of the first students, at once envious of the growing fame of the young Briton, and stung by the flippancy of his retorts, under the disguise of supporting their master, thus wantonly attacked, were loud in their indignation. But the general applause of the public went with him; for he was young, handsome, witty, and agreeable¹⁷.

The schools, as we know from the histories of the age, were not only filled with students, as at present; but men in years, persons of distinction, fathers of families, and ministers of state, after the toils of the day were over, crowded to them as to a theatre of amusement. There was novelty in the scene, and Latin, the language of the disputants, was very generally understood. The tournaments

¹⁶ Hist. Calam.

¹⁷ Præf. Apologet.

and other martial exercifes, which, foon after prevailed in Europe, were to the body, what thefe controversies had been to the mind. The gauntlet of defiance was here alfo thrown down, and bold or prefumptuous was the man, who dared to take it up. B O O K
I.

Abeillard, now cōfident from fuccefs, and elated by the applaufe of his admirers, weighed his own powers, and thought them equal to any attempt. He was twenty-two years old; an age, when the human mind, in the fpringtide of paffion, views the labors of Hercules, as the eafy bufinefs of a morning's amufement. “ I was “ young indeed, fays he, but confident of myfelf, “ my ambition had no bounds: I afpired to the “ dignity of a profeffor, and only waited till I “ could fix on a proper place to open my “ lectures ¹⁸.”

The court often refided at Melun, then a con-
fiderable town on the Seine, ten leagues above Paris. The circumftance was highly favorable to his views, could he obtain permiffion to settle there: but it was not eafily to be effected. The intereft of de Champeaux and his friends, he knew, was great, and all this intereft would be exerted to counteract his defigns. It is true; nothing was left unattempted againft him; fecret

Teaches at
Melun and
Corbeil.

¹⁸ Hift. Calam.

BOOK
L

machinations and open opposition were all in motion; but the good fortune of Abeillard prevailed. De Champeaux had some enemies among the great; the resentful motives which prompted his opposition were evident; Abeillard was young and youth, in some circumstances, carries an impression with it, too powerful for the schemes and wary circumspection of age and experience. After six months of intrigue and contest, the old professor gave way, and Abeillard entered Melun at the head of a numerous band of followers. The victory was signal ¹⁹.

The schools opened with eclat. The late opposition had but given lustre to his name, and animation to his talents. His lessons were thronged: curiosity was on tiptoe to see the youth, who had discomfited the Goliath of Paris; and the most brilliant success attended his exertions.

Thus having run, some months, in the undisturbed enjoyment of public applause, when a mind less turbulent and ambitious would have reposed in the possession of fame, Abeillard meditated new hostilities against his old master. Tranquillity was ill-adapted to his character; he breathed easier in a storm; and the want of a rival was the want of a stimulus, without which admiration itself had little power to please.

¹⁹ Hist. Calam.

The recollection of ill-usage, the petulance of youth, and, as he owns himself, an overweening presumption, aided, as may be imagined, by the flattering instigation of friends, urged him to this extraordinary step. He left Melun, and advanced to Corbeil, within five leagues of Paris ²⁰.

De Champeaux heard of the approach of the young adventurer with dismay and indignation: it was bringing defiance even to his doors: and what was a circumstance peculiarly irritating, this beardless professor had arranged in systematic order the various opinions of his master, and then he attacked with all the acrimony of wit, and the power of disputation. Nor satisfied with frittering into dust his strongest arguments, on their ruins he erected systems of his own, he formed new plans of opposition, and was throughout supported by the acclamations of his scholars, who were ready to go any lengths with a master, whom they loved and admired.—De Champeaux was not idle: if the enemy conquered, he was determined his victory should be dearly bought. They met repeatedly at each other's school; and the road betwixt Corbeil and Paris was crowded with their respective scholars, who, emulating the ardor of their masters, sought every occasion of signalizing their zeal and prowess. Victory hung not long in sus-

²⁰ Hist. Calam.

BOOK

I.

Subjects in
debate.

penſe; Abeillard made an eaſy conqueſt, and the enemy retired in confuſion. The palm of victory waved proudly in his hand ²¹. "

The reader will wiſh to know what thoſe important matters were, which could command ſo much intereſt, and in which the paſſions of thouſands were engaged. A ſuperficial view over the face of ſociety, at all times, will tell him that, it matters not what the thing itſelf may be: but once raiſe the attention of men, and their paſſions, as by a magic touch, will ruſh forward into faction, whether it be to aſcertain the juſt dimensions of a gewgaw, or to give away an empire.

The grand point then in debate, and which continued for centuries in high litigation, was, whether that which is *universal* in the mind has alſo a *real* exiſtence in nature; that is, whether Peter and John, individuals of the human race, poſſeſs ſo completely the totallity of rational nature, as to be only *accidentally* different men. — Champeaux maintained the affirmative, Abeillard the negative, queſtion.—If the whole *effence* of humanity, objected the latter, be *ſubſtantially* in each individual, then are John and Peter the ſame man; or, if all be in Peter, what is left for John? There is but one human ſubſtance, he urged, in nature, and of this all the individuals of the univerſe muſt be

²¹ Vie d'Abeil.

accounted modes.—He might likewise have insisted on the arguments, which have since been enforced against the doctrine of Spinoza; for the two opinions are very nearly allied.—If the same human nature be not *indivisibly* in Peter and John, replied Champeaux, they are not both men, for it is only the attribute of humanity which makes them what they are²².—He was not aware that these abstracted ideas had no existence out of his own mind; that they expressed nothing which could be found in nature.—Had their notions been derived from this source, the object of their researches would have been something real, and mankind would not so long have wandered in the regions of error or of romantic extravagance.

On the two notions, just mentioned, were founded the respective systems of the *nominalists* and *realists*, sects of such high renown in the christian schools, that their disputes, for ages, seemed to have absorbed the strongest exertions of human wit.—Many, and very similar, were the other questions in agitation. Could their enumeration possibly give pleasure, it should not be withheld. Enough perhaps has been instanced to damp the most ardent curiosity: if not, I must refer my reader to the schoolmen, whose volumes have come down to us, full and unadulterated as they fell from their pens.

²² Vie d'Abeil. p. 25. Bayle, vol. i.

B O O K

I.

He falls sick
and retires.

Abeillard now deemed himself the chosen minion of fortune, and nothing, it seemed, could retard his ascent to higher honors. But incessant application had preyed on his health; his fibres were yet too weak to support so long a tension; and delicacy of frame soon effected what the efforts of de Champeaux had aimed at in vain. By the advice of his physicians, when all other means had proved ineffectual, he left Corbeil, and retired to his native country ²¹.—It was well judged that cessation from labor, and the air of Britany, which had given the first tone to his constitution, would probably best ensure his recovery.—Here he remained two long years, at a distance, he observes, from all that was dearest to him, and only consoled by the repeated assurances of his friends, that his return was anxiously wished for by all, whose souls were enamoured of the love of wisdom.

During this period of retirement, every thing was calm in the schools of Paris. De Champeaux, freed from the pressure of his rival, had leisure to breathe in peace; and he looked forward towards church-preferment, as to the adequate reward of his services. For some time, he had been archdeacon of Paris, a post of dignity and trust.

At the times I am describing, the general face of religion was much disfigured by private vices

²¹ Hist. Calam.

and public crimes: nor did the conduct of its ministers merit less reprehension: on the contrary, the secular clergy, in particular, was ignorant and undisciplined, effeminate and licentious. To remedy the evil, as far as might be, recourse was often had to the cloisters: Here could be found men, endowed at least with more piety and learning, and these were promoted to the first ecclesiastical dignities. Hence the ambitious sometimes became monks; the humility of the profession, they knew, might lead to honors; and though the mitre should never press their brows, still, in the monastic life itself, there were posts of splendor and emolument, wherein vanity might be satisfied, and even ambition could find a pillow on which to repose.—With these views, it is said, de Champeaux entered the cloister. He chose for his retreat a small monastery, then out of the walls of Paris, and which, in process of time, became the celebrated convent of St. Victor. In the eye of the philosopher, to whom the definitions of universal nature were familiar, but little, it seems, was necessary to constitute a monk; for in his new habit he retained his old ways; the same lectures continued; he was contentious as before; and the little convent of St. Victor became a school of controversy and philosophic warfare ²⁴.

BOOK

I.

²⁴ Hist. Calam.

BOOK

L

To his logical disputations he, in a short time, subjoined lessons on rhetoric, and these were followed by more important theological discussions. De Champeaux is said to have been the first master who had ventured to give public lectures in divinity, in the form of polemic disputations²⁵; but when Abeillard was away, and his abilities, which, it must be owned, were very great, had their full play, the whole range of science seemed placed within the easy grasp of his comprehension.

He returns to
Paris.

Such were the events which had taken place at Paris, when Abeillard, in the vigor of revived health, returned from Britany. He was now twenty-eight years old. His mind also, genially refreshed by repose and inward rumination on itself, had acquired a new spring: he had extended, doubtless, his former train of ideas, had arranged them in fresh combinations, and had added considerably to the old stock.—It is with the mind of man, as with the earth we tread on; her fruitful lap must sometimes repose from the harrow, or instead of teeming with plenty, she will give us weeds, or her best produce will be feeble and uninvigorating.—He came straight to Paris.

De Champeaux was in the quiet possession of the lectures, just mentioned, when Abeillard

²⁵ Vie d'Abeil.

re-appeared. It was a moment of some anxiety to both ; but the young man evidently showed an indecision , which could not at once be unravelled. He weighed his situation ; when , to the surprise of every one , he again put himself under the tuition of his old master , and frequented his rhetorical lesson. There was a mystery in this conduct : either he felt himself deficient in the art , or he hoped to regain the favor of a person , whose enmity , he had reason to suspect , might prove an obstacle to his future progress , or it was his wish perhaps to have it more easily in his power to humble the man he hated. He himself barely relates the fact.

De Champeaux , if he was ignorant of the human heart , or if vanity had obscured his judgment , might be flattered by this apparent submission. The daring youth , who had braved him in the schools and triumphed , now voluntarily courts his instruction , and seems disposed to take wisdom from his lips !—But the illusive dream soon vanished. It could not be , that rivals , whose prejudices were inveterate , whose opinions so widely varied , and whose pursuits were the same , could meet again , and really be friends. Abeillard once more assailed his enemy in the open field of controversy , (for though rhetoric was his leading object , he frequented the other lessons ,) and so irresistible was the attack , particularly on the great point of

BOOK *universal essences*, which I have described, that de Champeaux, opiniative and supported as he was, owned himself convinced, and publicly subscribed to the opinion of his adversary.—It might be the effect of conviction, of pusillanimity, or of a mind rendered lowly by the influence of the cowl. The public, at least, judged unfavorably of the step; his credit left him, his scholars withdrew, and it was even in agitation to forbid him the schools of philosophy ²⁶.

Abeillard knew how to conquer, and how to avail himself of victory: he received, with great marks of benevolence, the scholars of de Champeaux, and again opened his school with more splendor, and with more general approbation than ever. Very soon he was the sole professor in Paris, for he who had succeeded to de Champeaux, when he became a monk and retired to St. Victor, of his own accord waited on Abeillard, surrendered to him his chair of philosophy, and requested to be enrolled in the number of his disciples ²⁷.—This may be regarded as the most brilliant epoch in the life of Abeillard. He rose every morning to the smiles of an approving public; and the church, at the same time, willing to testify the high opinion she entertained of his merit, presented him with a canonicate in the cathedral of

²⁶ Hist. Calam.

²⁷ Ibid.

Paris ²¹.—It was a sinecure, and the emoluments were bestowed on him without any further obligation; for I do not find he was at all engaged in the ecclesiastical state. BOOK
I.

De Champeaux viewed with pain the bright sunshine, which seemed hourly to expand round his adversary: he was determined to obstruct its spread; but as he was cautious to attack a reputation which, he knew, he could not fully, he hit on an expedient which succeeded.—Though the person, I have mentioned, had resigned the honors of his chair to Abeillard, he had still retained the salary, and was therefore in fact the regular professor. This man he accused of crimes and misdemeanors, and so far made good his charges, that he was removed from his office, and another was chosen in his place, who, it may well be imagined, bore little kindness towards Abeillard, or wished to patronise his renown ²².

Abeillard was unprepared for this wily stratagem, and once more he found himself necessitated to retire to Melun. To be outwitted by an enemy he despised was a mortifying circumstance; in other regards, the event only served to enhance his fame. The most prejudiced began to suspect what the motives were which had instigated the conduct of de Champeaux, even from

²¹ Vie d'Abeil. p. 28.

²² Hist. Calam.

BOOK

I.

the first commencement of hostilities; the number of his friends increased; his lectures were received with a more marked applause, if possible; and in triumph of soul he applied to himself the line of Ovid,

Summa petit livor, perflant altissima venti.

De Rem. Am. l. 1.

Even the best friends of de Champeaux were severe in their reflections. Monk as he now is, said they, he should retire from the world; the noise of the schools and the dissipating scenes of Paris, accord ill with his new profession; woods and solitude would give an edge to his devotion, and dispose him for a nearer intercourse with heaven³⁰.—Stung by these reproaches, he saw it was time to give way, and having prevailed on the monks to accompany him, they all removed from St. Victor to a country-retirement more remote from the city.

Abeillard, hearing of the enemy's flight, apprehended he might return without further molestation, and again he turned his face towards the capital. But as the schools, within the walls, were possessed by the new professor, he advanced only as far as the mount of St. Genevieve, there halted, and encompassed by his followers, with

³⁰ Hist. Calam.

all expedition, made the necessary preparations for a vigorous assault on the enemy.—The mount of St. Genevieve has long been rendered famous by a large abbey, which covers its summit; nor is it less famous on account of the superstitious veneration which, even at this day, the inhabitants of the most dissipated, the most enlightened, and perhaps most unbelieving city in the universe, practise round the shrine of the holy shepherdes, who has given her name to the mountain.—When I speak of superstitious veneration, it is clear I mean such abuses, as every traveller has witnessed, and every good man has lamented.

In the retirement of his country-cell, de Champeaux being informed of the step his rival had taken, instantly took the alarm, and with his whole community returned in haste to St. Victor, resolved, says Abeillard, either to raise the siege, or to support, at all perils, the fortune of his friend. His presence, however, produced not the intended effect. For no sooner was the voice of de Champeaux again heard in the schools, than the new professor, whose talents, it appears, were very slender, found himself deserted by his scholars, and the two rival philosophers remained the sole champions on the field³¹.

I leave it to the reader, whose mind perhaps

³¹ Hist. Calam.

BOOK I. may have been warmed by the novelty of an uncommon story, to picture to himself those scenes of acrimony, and pertinacious disputation, which rapidly succeeded to one another among the scholars of these able masters and the two heroes themselves. Abeillard is rather modest in his narration: but, says he, I think, I may boldly take to myself the words of Ajax,

Si quæritis hujus

Fortunam pugnae, non sum superatus ab illo.

Ovid. Met. l. xiii.

He goes again
into Britany.

In the midst of this high tide of desperate controversy, he received a letter from his mother, requesting he would, without delay, come into Britany, on some family-business, which concerned her much. He obeyed the summons with an alacrity that did him credit. It was leaving the post of honor at a crisis, when the general aspect of the day seemed to promise a certainty of success: but the call of nature came nearer to his heart than all the honors, however great his ambition might be, which fortune seemed prepared to shower upon him. When the heart of a wise man ceases to vibrate to the gentle impressions of humanity, he becomes a monster, and should retire to the woods. — The mother of Abeillard, after the retreat of her husband from the world, now meditated the same step: it was the fashion of the times:

and the previous settlement of some wordly matters seems to have been the business which called Abeillard from the schools. Whatever it was, his stay in Britany was short: he returned, but he found, to his surprise, that de Champeaux, during the interval of his absence, had been decorated with the mitre of Chalons ¹².

Here I shall leave this extraordinary man. He has exhibited a scene not incurious in itself; not from the display of an uncommon character, for his passions were the common passions of man; nor because, saint-like as he is said to have been, he pursued the darling object of his ambition with unceasing ardor, for this is no unusual thing, at all times; but merely because the business, in which he was engaged, differs from the pursuits of modern habits, and is therefore novel to us. Every man, whose heart is not at ease, looks round for what he wants, and if his character be peculiar, he will seize on a peculiar object. But, in many regards, it would surely have been well for the common interests of humanity, had all the ardent spirit of the eleventh century been as innocently employed, as was that of de Champeaux. Europe was in a state of fermentation.

Abeillard, returned to the schools, saw nothing any longer worth contending for: He stood with-

B O O K

I.

He resolves
to study divi-
nity.

¹² Hist. Calam. Fleury, &c.

BOOK out a rival; but then he stood without feeling
 I. that thrill of pleasure, which success gives to animated exertions: besides, this rival, who had given way before him and owned his inferiority, had first reached, notwithstanding, the goal of his wishes: to the honors he had obtained, he thought perhaps that he himself had equal, if not better pretensions. — Disappointment would be the consequence of these reflections; and when this happens, a disgust of former pursuits often follows, whilst the heart sinks from its expansion, and hardly seems to fill the breast. — Moreover, philosophy had no longer any novelty in his eyes: he had seen her, and that familiarly, in all the forms, whether of art or nature, which she could then exhibit. Reflection might also have told him, that there were other studies more deserving of attention, wherein an object could be found more adequate to his talents; and in these thoughts the advice of a parent might have confirmed him, whom he greatly honored, and who then was turning her back on the empty employments of a vain world. — Abeillard assented to these suggestions of reason, and at once resolved to apply himself to the study of theology¹¹.

The reader has gone with me over more than the twenty last years of the eleventh century, and I have confined his view barely to those

¹¹ Hist. Calam.

transactions, in which Abeillard, the hero of these pages, bore a principal part. The introduction of large objects into the small scene, I was delineating, would have had a preposterous effect; it would have destroyed that harmony or unity of design, which pleases best. But, during this short period, very great events had agitated the christian world: them I will now bring forward; they will give an agreeable relief to the eye; and we will review them, on a large scale, with the unprejudiced coolness of historical candor.

BOOK
I.

Hildebrand, the famous Gregory the seventh, then wore the triple crown. He had been educated at Cluni, a French monastery of high renown, in the severity of monastic discipline; had then risen to the first dignities in the church; and during the pontificates of five successive Popes, had been honored with their confidence in the discharge of the most arduous business. — It is well known what a torrent of vice had then spread itself over the face of christendom: to stem this, in vain had every effort been made, which honest virtue and christian zeal could suggest. Hildebrand, with the keen sensibility of a virtuous mind, had long viewed the fallen state of religion, and he ascended the Papal throne, with the unanimous approbation of all orders of the Roman church, big with vast designs of reformation. “We chuse
“Hildebrand for the true vicar of Christ,” (they

Gregory VII.
Pope.

B O O K are the words used at this election,) “a man of
 I. “ much learning, of great piety, of prudence,
 “ justice, fortitude, and religion. He is modest,
 “ abstemious, and chaste; regular in the discipline
 “ of his family, hospitable to the poor, and from
 “ his tender years nursed in the bosom of our holy
 “ church: to him we give those powers of supre-
 “ macy, which Peter once received from the mouth
 “ of God.”

The source of the evils, he lamented, lay, it was evident, in the general corruption of manners, in the unbounded sway of passion, and in the abuse of power. With an intrepidity of soul, that perhaps was never equalled, he dared singly to oppose this multitudinous enemy, and he called the sovereigns of Europe to his tribunal. The motives which led him on, and the habits of stern virtue, which had steeled his character, excluded almost the possibility of suspicion, that he himself perhaps was arrogating a power, which belonged not to him, and from the abuse of which even greater evils might ensue, than those he aimed to suppress. Minds of the widest comprehension may be sometimes so engrossed by a single object, as to be insensible to the most obvious deductions, which reason in vain holds up before them. But the mis-conceptions of Gregory were those of a great

“ Platina and others.

man, and his errors were, in part, the errors of the age. BOOK.

I.

To effectuate more completely the schemes he had in view, he conceived the bold design of making himself sole monarch of the earth. The concerns of Europe, whether ecclesiastical or civil, would then be brought within his own cognizance; he should distribute favors, as merit might seem to call for them; and he would dispose of crowns; which, too often, he observed, fell upon the heads of the unworthy, or of men who knew not the proper use of power.

Enthroned in the chair of the humble fisherman, Gregory put his hand to the work. The simoniacal disposal of church-livings was a crying sin, which called aloud for redress, and he hesitated not to aim the first blow at the very root of the disorder, though it lay in the rapacious breast of power; and in the courts of Princes.—The incontinence of the clergy was another foul stain on religion; for the sons of God seeing the daughters of men that they were fair, took to them helpmates from among all that they chose. The stern pontiff had no indulgence for this weakness of his brethren.

During the twelve years of his reign he held eleven councils at Rome, the object of all which was, the suppression of the crimes, I have mentioned, or to enforce the execution of decrees or

BOOK I. discipline, or to confirm, by a more solemn sanction, the sentences of excommunication and deposition which, in the plenitude of his supposed power, he had pronounced against the obstinate and refractory.

In two synods he compelled Berengarius, who had innovated in the doctrine of the Lord's Supper, to abjure his opinions, and to subscribe to the ancient faith.—The general opposition, which the dogmatical sentiments of this man excited, proves at least their novelty in the eleventh century,

Studious of reconciling the long divided churches of the East and West, he had purposed to proceed himself to Constantinople, and to bring the grand controversy to issue. The disturbances of Europe forbad it.—He wrote to the Grecian Emperor, who had implored his succour that, at the head of the powers of the West, he would march to his assistance; and he conjured the German Henry and William Duke of Burgundy to join him in the enterprize³⁵.—The idea did honor to the magnanimous spirit of Gregory; but twenty more years were to elapse before Europe would be prepared to send her holy warriors against the Infidel powers of the Eastern world.

He reprimanded Salomon King of Hungary, that he had dared to accept the investiture of his

³⁵ Nat. Alex. sæc. xi.

realm from the hand of the Emperor, and not from Rome. Hungary, said he, was rendered feudatory of the holy see by Stephen, the best of her kings, and your right of holding the sceptre is from hence ¹⁶.

BOOK
I.

He wrote to the kings of Denmark, of Sweden, and of Norway, reproving what had been ill done, and urging them to the due discharge of their duties in the support of religion, and in procuring the welfare of their people; but particularly he pressed on their attention a filial obedience to the apostolic see ¹⁷.

The murder of Stanislaus, bishop of Cracow, he revenged on the Polish king and the other perpetrators of the crime, in the most signal manner. In execration of the deed, the whole kingdom was laid under an interdict, the king deprived of all regal power, and his subjects absolved from their allegiance. None of the sons of those, who either aided or advised the crime, said he, shall be promoted to holy orders to the end of the fourth generation ¹⁸.

The kingdom of Spain, he pretended, had, from time immemorial, belonged to the Roman church; and when the count de Ronci applied to him for permission to retain the lands he might conquer from the Saracens, who then possessed them; he granted his prayer, on condition, he should hold

¹⁶ Fleury, vol. xiii.

¹⁷ Nat. Alex. sæc. xi.

¹⁸ Ibid.

B O O K them in the name of St. Peter. But I would rather,
 I. he observed, they should remain in the hands of the infidels, than that christians should possess them, who might refuse to do homage to the holy see³⁹.

Alfonfus, king of Castile, who had married the near relation of his first wife, he threatened with excommunication, if he dared to cohabit any longer with her; and he admonished him to remove the evil counsellors, who had advised him perversely. “ Weighing, with awful
 “ resolution, says he, the value of earthly
 “ possessions, it is then, I think, that a bishop
 “ best merits his name, when in the cause of
 “ justice, he suffers persecution. In obedience
 “ to the laws of heaven, I will rather be hated
 “ by the wicked, than flatter their desires, and
 “ incur the anger of an irritated God⁴⁰. ”

To Dalmatia, to the states of Venice, and to Sardinia, he wrote in the same style of a judge and their supreme governor. — Even to the inhospitable clime of Russia he extended his monarchical jurisdiction. “ Your son, says he
 “ to king Demetrius, has been with me,
 “ requesting that I would make over your
 “ kingdom to him, in the name of St. Peter.
 “ His petition appeared just, and I granted it⁴¹. ”

The sons of count Raymond had quarrelled;

³⁹ Fleury, vol. xiii. ⁴⁰ Nat. Alex. sæc. xi. ⁴¹ Fleury, ibid.

Gregory, as the umpire between contending princes, undertook to reconcile them. "Tell

BOOK

I.

"them, says he, that, if they disobey my orders, and continue enemies, I will deprive them of the protection of St. Peter: them and their abettors I will retrench from the society of christians: from that moment, their arms shall be successless in war, nor shall they ever prosper."

William, our Norman conqueror, he treated with unusual lenity; he speaks of his virtues, of his moderation, and his justice; and because he had shown more respect, than other princes, towards the holy see, his regal power, he thinks should be more mildly handled. But when he sent his legate into England to demand an oath of fealty to himself and successors, and to urge the more regular payment of the subsidy due to Rome, the monarch answered, that the money should be remitted; "but as to the oath, said he, I neither have nor will make it, because I have never promised it, nor do I find that it was ever made by my predecessors to yours." — The pontiff was irritated; "it is his submission, and not his money, that I value, said he;" but he acquiesced: he seemed to be awed by William, and probably admired in him that boldness of spirit, which, from the dukedom of

"Fleury, vol. xiii.

B O O K I. Normandy, had raised him to the throne of England".

The same was not his moderation towards Philip, king of France. Hearing that he had refused to admit to their sees some bishops, who had been canonically chosen, he addressed a letter to the French prelates, expressive of his strongest indignation: "either your king, said he, shall
"cease from his simoniacal conduct, or the realm
"of France, struck by a general anathema, shall
"withdraw from his obedience, unless they
"rather chuse to renounce their christianity." Philip gave way. — Afterwards, in a letter to the monarch himself, he says: "reflect, Sir, how
"great was the glory of your ancestors, as long as
"they continued faithful to the church, and
"protected its rights: but no sooner, in a change
"of manners, have the divine and human laws
"been trampled on, than your power and
"celebrity are no more. The important duties
"of my charge will often compel me to repeat
"these truths to you, and sometimes perhaps in
"severer language." — Philip had seized by violence the property of some Italian merchants: Gregory commanded him to restore it; should he neglect to do it, he wrote to the count of Poitiers, that it was his intention to remove him from his throne. "Should he persevere in his

" Fleury, vol. xiii.

“ iniquities, we will sever him and all those who
 “ shall obey him as their king, from the
 “ communion of the faithful; and every day
 “ shall this anathema be renewed on the altar of
 “ St. Peter. We have borne his crimes too long;
 “ but now were his power equal to that which
 “ the emperors of Rome practised on the martyrs,
 “ no human fear should withhold our vengeance
 “ any longer.”

BOOK.

I.

But it was with Henry the Fourth, emperor of Germany, that was the grand quarrel, and here we shall see marked, in the strongest colors, the magnanimous and proud spirit of Gregory. What first raised the indignation of the zealous pontiff, was the simoniacal distribution of benefices, publicly practised by Henry; and he was accused of various other crimes. The pope exerted all his powers to stem the raging torrent; he advised, he expostulated, he reprimanded, and he threatened. It was in vain; conspiracies were formed against him, his person was seized, but he was rescued by the timely interference of the Roman populace. Under pain of anathema, he then ordered Henry to appear before him at Rome, and he fixed the day for his appearance. The emperor disobeyed the summons, convoked an assembly at Worms; Gregory is accused of crimes, as unfounded, as they are scandalous.

“ Fleury, vol. xiii.

BOOK and the sentence of deposition is pronounced
I. against him. On the other hand, the pope calls a synod at Rome, where the prince is solemnly excommunicated and deposed, and his subjects are forbidden to obey him. The sentence was in these words. — “ Peter, prince of the apostles,
“ listen to thy servant, whom thou hast tutored
“ from his youth, and whom, to the present
“ hour, thou hast freed from the hands of the
“ wicked, who hate me, because I am faithful
“ to thee. Thou canst witness, and with thee
“ can witness the holy mother of Christ, and
“ thy brother Paul, that unwillingly I was
“ compelled to mount this holy throne. Rather
“ would I have worn out my life in exile, than
“ have usurped thy seat to gain glory and the
“ praise of mortals. By thy favor has the care
“ of the christian world been committed to me;
“ from thee I have the power of binding and
“ of loosening. Resting on this assurance, for
“ the honor and support of the church, in
“ the name of God the Father almighty, of his
“ Son, and of the Holy Ghost, I depose Henry,
“ who rashly and insolently has raised his arm
“ against thy church, from all imperial and
“ regal power, and his subjects I absolve from all
“ allegiance to him. For it is meet that he, who
“ aims to retrench the majesty of thy church,
“ should be despoiled of his own honors “.”

“ Plat. Fleury, &c.

It was the first time that such a sentence had been pronounced against a sovereign prince. — Moderate men were shocked at the procedure, and talked of terms of accommodation. “ I am

B O O K .

I.

“ no enemy to concord , replied Gregory , let
“ Henry first make his peace with heaven :
“ nor did I proceed to this rigor , till all other
“ means had been tried in vain.”— Some observed that a prince should not be excommunicated.—

“ And when Christ committed his church to
“ Peter , answered the pontiff sternly , saying ,
“ feed my sheep , did he except kings ? ”

The nobles of Germany , whom the crimes and misconduct of Henry had exasperated , resolve not to lose so favorable an occasion of resenting their injuries , and publicly announce their intention of electing another master. To ward off the blow , Henry crossed the Alps , hoping by this apparent submission , to appease also the anger of Gregory. Arrived at Canusium , a castle belonging to the countess Matilda , where the pope then was , he dismissed his guard , laid down every ensign of royalty , and barefooted , in the humble garb of a penitent , he presented himself at the gates. He was refused admittance. It was winter , and the season was severe. Here he remained , silent and submissive , till the rising of the fourth sun , when , at the entreaty of Matilda and others , he was admitted to the presence of

B O O K Gregory. An accommodation took place, and
 I. his absolution was pronounced, on condition, that he should ever remain obedient to the holy see, that he should appear before his accusers to answer to their charges, and that he should abide by the final award of Rome. Henry assented “.

In the presence of the people, Gregory then celebrated the sacred mysteries; and after the consecration, whilst the emperor and his assistants stood round the altar; “ I have been accused, “ said he, (turning towards them with the holy “ bread in his hand,) by you and your party, “ of various crimes, as well before as since my “ promotion to the chair of St. Peter. They “ that know me can sufficiently attest my innocence; “ but that the world may know it; let this body “ of our Lord, which you see, be a witness to “ me: if I am guilty, may I die!” Uttering these words, he put a part of the sacred bread into his mouth, and swallowed it.—The solemn and unexpected action struck the assembly, and their acclamations sounded through the castle. The pontiff then addressed the astonished prince. “ My son, the remaining portion is for you. The “ German nobles have accused you, and they “ demand that you be judged; but how uncertain “ are the judgments of men! If you feel yourself “ innocent, at once save your own honor,

“ Fleury, *ibid.*

“ silence your enemies , and make me your friend. B O O K
 God shall be your judge.” So saying, he advanced I.
 towards him: the emperor shrunk back , and with-
 drawing , for a moment , with his friends , it
 was determined that he should not expose himself
 to the tremendous ordeal *7.

The Lombards , looking with indignation on
 this base submission of their king, resolve to give
 their allegiance to his son, who was yet an infant.
 Henry takes the alarm , and breaks through the
 treaty he had just contracted. — But the German
 states assemble at Forcheim, and being informed
 by the pope’s legates , that the sentence of
 deposition against Henry had not been revoked,
 though he had been taken into communion, they
 elect for their king Rodolphus duke of Suabia. —
 Gregory , to whom sufficient attention had not
 been paid in this important step , for some time
 seemed to remain neuter between the contending
 factions. He received their ambassadors , who
 came to petition that the artillery of the vatican
 might play on their respective enemies. The
 pontiff only answered, that they should first lay
 down their arms, and he would judge their causes.
 But inaction ill-accommoded with his restless disposition:
 he convoked another synod, wherein Henry was
 again excommunicated and deposed, and his
 dominions solemnly transferred to Rodolphus. To

*7 Fleury, *ibid.*

B O O K I. the new king he promised victory; and seemed to predict death and successful arms to the deposed monarch. Heaven was inattentive to his voice; for after repeated battles, Rodolphus himself fell. Henry then marched to Rome, accompanied by Guibertus, archbishop of Ravenna, whom he had chosen anti-pope, and laid siege to the castle of St. Angelo. The tiara trembled on the head of Gregory; and he was on the point of falling into the hands of his enemy, when the renowned Robert Guiscard, who was become the fast friend of the pontiff, marched from the East to his deliverance. The siege was raised, and Henry, whom his anti-pope had just crowned emperor, retired. But the Romans, worn down by troubles and the devastations of war, began to treat Gregory as the author of their misfortunes. His high spirit could ill-brook this reverse of fortune: he withdrew to Salerno, where he died the year following, in 1085⁴⁸.

Nor was he more indulgent to the vices of churchmen, than to the excesses of princes. Bishops and archbishops, whose sins were flagrant, he excommunicated and deposed in all quarters of the globe, and his censures fell, like the hail in March, wherever vice dared to rear its head. But to the virtuous he was indulgent, and he rewarded their merit.

⁴⁸ Platina, Fleury, &c.

Notwithstanding this extraordinary severity of character and conduct, Gregory found friends in the softer sex. Agnes, mother to Henry, and Matilda his relation, countess of Tuscany, admired him as the greatest and best of men: nor was theirs a sterile admiration. The countess made over to the holy see all her possessions; which were considerable, in Lombardy and Tuscany; her purse and interest were ever devoted to Gregory; and her armies were ready to march at his call. As might be expected, his enemies, who were numerous, and particularly the churchmen, whose incontinence he chastised with a severe hand, were loud in their reflections; but so irreproachable and so exemplary was the tenor of his life, that malevolence itself could not tarnish its lustre⁴⁹.

Such was Gregory the Seventh. It has been his lot, as it has been that of all great men, to be admired by some, and to be censured by others. These reflect not that he lived in the eleventh century, when the manners of the age, and the ideas of men, were so different from those of the present day. We generally measure the conduct of others at a very unfair standard. — The notions of Gregory were some of them, I confess, even then novel; but they were principally grounded

⁴⁹ Platina, Fleury, &c.

BOOK on a newly-discovered collection of decrees,
I. to which the weak criticism of the times gave great authenticity. The high powers he exercised were not disputed in their principle; he was even urged to the use of them, as contending factions judged they might be serviceable to their views.

If we contemplate Gregory with the same eyes, with which we look on an Alexander or on a Cæsar, I think, we may be disposed to raise him far above the level of those mighty conquerors. With them he aimed at universal empire, but with views far more meritorious than theirs. His great ambition was to extirpate vice from the earth, and over its surface to extend the benign influence of that religion which himself practised and revered. Before a mind, swelling with this noble project, was it not natural, that princes and sceptred kings should sink into insignificance? He would treat them as impediments, which lay in the way of his designs. Gregory, at the head of armies, would have called after him the admiration of posterity: we view him in another light, because habituated to appreciate what are called great qualities, by the conquest of kingdoms and the overthrow of armies, we have not eyes for other talents, or for achievements formed in another order of things.

But though this power of Gregory, which his successors, as circumstances favored, long strove to support, could sometimes check the progress of vice, yet could it not, by any means, complete the object they had in view. The evil was too inveterate. — Europe was divided into an infinity of petty states, the heads over which lived in perpetual hostilities. Thus was formed a scale of oppression: the strongest became the tyrant; but the weakest also had vassals, on whom the hand of despotism pressed with all the weight it had. — General dissipation, and the consequence of it general indolence, gave birth to the basest species of crimes; and had not the call of arms roused them into action, the state of humanity would have been greatly more deplorable than it was. The disorders of a relaxed habit are often the most fatal.

B O O K
I.

When we listen to the descriptions, exaggerated it may be presumed, which some historians give of the kingdom of France, the mind draws back with horror. Yet in the midst of this scene, the light and airy Philip indulged himself in all the joys of wine and women. Tired of his queen, he forcibly took to his arms Bertrada, the wife of the count of Anjou, and he called upon the laws to give their sanction to the iniquitous deed.

State of
France.

BOOK

I.

The thunders of the vatican rolled over his head and fell; but he had address enough to ward off the worst effect of excommunication, which was deposition, and the consequent defection of his subjects. — The rapacity of the great barons was insatiable; and the bishop, those meek-eyed ministers of peace, bound on the helmet, and with the arm of flesh defended the rights of the church and their own possessions⁵⁰.

State of
England.

In England the general aspect of affairs was more pleasing, than in other parts of Europe. The conquest, though humbling to the British spirit, was productive of happy effects. It served to rouse the fallen character of the nation: there was something in the Norman blood well adapted to coalesce with the English constitution, and to improve it; a new tide of life began to flow in our veins. Till then, almost unknown and little important in the connexion of Europe, England, like a new constellation, appeared above the horizon, and soon rose to the first magnitude by its learning, by its commerce, by its conquests. — William, indeed, was a tyrant, but what conqueror was ever otherwise? The severity of his reign was the natural effect of circumstances: he had to break the proud spirit of his new subjects,

⁵⁰ Daniel, Fleury, &c.

which, left to itself, must ever have fermented into plots and insurrections; he had to show them that it was not the capricious will of fortune which had put the sceptre into his hand, but that he owed it to the sure ascendancy of his own abilities and arm, and therefore that he was able to maintain it; and he had to reward those brave companions, who had bled and conquered by his side. In his friends he saw merit, which, he could not descry in his enemies, and what wonder, if the possessions of the latter were seized to enrich them; but even here he wished to support the outward forms of justice".

B O O K
I.

His son and successor, William Rufus, was a tyrant by principle, and never perhaps did a more stern and undisciplined heart beat in the human breast.

Lanfranc and Anselm, at this period successively filled the see of Canterbury; men of superior talents, of superior piety, and of superior fortitude. By them religion was supported, whilst its mild influence began to soften the ferocious manners of the age; and learning, under their protection, again dared to rear its head. England looked up to these venerable prelates, and in the milder light which beamed from their virtues seemed to discover something that might be admired,

" Hume and others.

BOOK and something that might be imitated. All was
I. not absorbed in the blaze of martial splendor.

Unfortunately, the notions of prerogative and exclusive privileges, which, originating from the chair of St. Peter, soon took possession of the breasts of churchmen, precipitated these worthy men into disputes with their sovereigns, from which fatal evils ensued. Thus was obstructed the spread of those many advantages which, in other circumstances, England would have derived from their talents and their virtues. When I read the invectives of modern historians against such men; I own, I blush: for their lives were without reproach, and the motives of their conduct, grounded on the approved maxims of the age, were dictated to them by honor and sincerity. Had they lived at some earlier or some later period, differently would they have acted; but in the eleventh century, not to have conformed to its principles, would have been a base surrender of rights and privileges, which every idea of their minds then told them to revere¹¹.

Though the historian, whose business it should be to detail the events of this period, and to portray the different characters, whom he should find deserving of great praise or of great reprehension,

¹¹ Fleury, Nat. Alex. sæc. xi. quoting original authors.

might find ample matter for his pen, and in that matter, ample amusement for his readers; yet is there one grand event which seems to occupy so large a space in the eye of the beholder, that all other objects dwindle away before it.—I have said what may be deemed sufficient to exhibit the general features of the times; that solely is my object; the remaining delineation will developé what else may be thought requisite to complete the portrait.

B O O K
I.

After Constantine, in the fourth century, had given celebrity to the christian religion, and by his care, and that of his mother Helen, Palestine in particular, the native land of our Saviour, had been decorated with many monuments of their piety, and the holy places at Jerusalem had been brought out to more public inspection; a certain instinctive veneration for that distant and venerable spot seized on the minds of men. The foil, on which Jesus Christ had stood, they deemed blessed; and what seems more extraordinary, says a writer who does not always reason justly, even the instruments which had been used in the shedding of his blood. What man, continues he, left to the free impulse of humanity, would imprint his kisses on the axe, that had let out the life of his dearest friend? The new impression was however made, and in many

The first Crusade.

BOOK it was founded on ideas of the sincerest piety. It
 I. may be called *new*, because it seems to have had no place in the minds of those christians, who were contemporary to the period when the great tragedy was performed.

Constantine, as his historians relate, had seen a miraculous apparition of the cross; and under that sign he had conquered. From that time, the cross was no longer a mark of infamy; it waved on the banners of his army; and the Roman eagle was taught to stoop before it. Out of compliment to the master of the world, had no pious impulse helped the bias, it was natural that respect should be shown to this favored sign.

Pilgrimages to the holy land soon became frequent, and soon they were fashionable. Even after the destruction of the Western empire, the journey was attended with no peculiar difficulties, because the new kingdoms which arose continued to profess the christian faith. But in the seventh century the great change took place; when the disciples of Mahomet, a people divided from us by religion, by language, and by manners, rose, like a dark cloud, in the East, and spread themselves over the surface of many kingdoms. Still were the pilgrims permitted to resort to Jerusalem: the pious travellers came not empty-handed; it was besides a species of devotion, of which the infidels

were themselves rather fond; and curiosity would be pleased at the sight of such a motly concourse of strangers from every corner of Europe. Mecca, on its brightest days, could hardly boast of a fairer spectacle.

BOOK

I.

Thus, for many years, continued this wondrous practice; when the Saracens masters of the land, no longer pleased with the idle scene, or irritated by the misconduct of the pilgrims, or apprehensive, not without reason, that enthusiasm might at last prompt them to meditate designs against the state; began to show them fewer marks of kindness, and even oppressed those of the christian name, who were settled amongst them. Of this oppression and of their own ill-treatment, they told a piteous and exaggerated tale, on their return to Europe; and dreadful indeed they said, it was, that the holy places should be possessed by the declared foes to the religion of Christ! To attempt their rescue however was an act of solemn chivalry, which only the lapse of ages could bring to maturity.

The Grecian emperors, indeed, were ever at war with the Ottoman powers; but it was to defend their own frontiers, which the enemy daily invaded with success. The blood ran back upon the heart, and the proud towers of Constantinople

BOOK I. trembled for their own security. It was no time to think of foreign conquests. — The Goths, the Lombards, the Franes, and other nations, which now rose into power, in the West, were embroiled in domestic quarrels, or occupied with schemes of self-preservation. Even from the infidels themselves they had reason to fear the most ruinous incursions: already they were in possession of the most fertile provinces of Spain, and the fate of Spain seemed to hover over the other states of Europe. Common policy should have told them, that the best security against the inroads of an enemy is, to carry war into his own territories. But, I have said, that the European powers were themselves unsettled.

It was only towards the close of the eleventh century, that the Western christians conceived the design of a general confederation against the infidels of the East. Gregory the seventh, the man whose virtues I praised, whose abilities I admired, but whose extravagancies I censured, seems first to have adopted the grand idea. Historians tell us⁵³, that he was moved to it by the melancholy recital of the sufferings of the Christians, who groaned under the Ottoman yoke. It might indeed be that, knowing how powerfully a tale of distress operated on the human mind, he would not lose

⁵³ Fleury and others.

its effect; and therefore urged it as an efficacious motive, whereby to accomplish more easily his designs. But he was too wise a man, I think, to give much weight, in his own mind, to a circumstance in itself so trifling. These christians were not numerous, and might readily have withdrawn from the hand which oppressed them. Nor can I for a moment suppose, he would deign to give a single thought to the suggestion, that, by marching into the East, he should be able to give protection to the pilgrims, or facilitate their wild emigrations into Palestine. Gregory had other views. The infidel powers were become terrible to Europe; their depredations were feared upon every maritime coast; they had landed in Italy, and insulted the gates of Rome.

Europe, I have also said, was cruelly lacerated by internal wars; the hand of every man was armed against his brother; nor did it seem, in the ordinary course of things, that this deplorable scene could be brought to a conclusion. They had had recourse indeed to a singular expedient, which was called the *Truce of God*, whereby it was forbidden, under pain of excommunication, to make any attack on a private enemy, from the setting of the sun on Wednesday to its rising on Monday morning. This was some relief.—

BOOK Commerce and agriculture, the finews and the
I. wealth of states, were little known; or those
thousand arts of peace, which give employment
to the more populous nations of modern times. —
But could the arms, which christians used for
mutual destruction, be turned against a common
enemy, the evils of domestic discord would
cease, and Europe might again prosper and be
happy “.

When in this light we view the crusades, they
will not perhaps appear to have been dictated by
that wild enthusiasm, to which generally they are
ascribed. Not that I mean to insinuate that the
multitude or their leaders were influenced by
such rational motives: these can only belong to
such men as Gregory or to Urban his successor.
The marching crusaders waved their banners under
a more animating impulse. They viewed them-
selves as the chosen foldiers of the Lord: they
looked to the land of Palestine, as to a country
they had a right to occupy, not reflecting, if the
present possessors were ejected, that it should
devolve to the Jews as an old inheritance; and
they were promised that, in the blood of the
unbelieving Mussulmen, their own crimes should
be cancelled.

“ Fleury, disc. 6.

To the expedition, of which I shall now speak, BOOK
 had been a curious prelude in 1064, when seven I.
 thousand Germans, at the head of whom was
 Sigefroi, archbishop of Mayence, in a body
 took up the pilgrim's staff, and marched towards
 Jerusalem. They were attacked, even on good
 Friday, by a superior band of twelve thousand
 Arabs, and, after a stout defence, were on the
 point of falling a prey to the rapacious infidels,
 when unexpectedly, at the rising of the sun on
 Easter Sunday, they were rescued by an army of
 Turks, and conducted, under a strong escort, to
 the walls of Jerusalem " !

When the minds of men, from a concurrence
 of circumstances, have been long exposed to
 certain impressions — it matters not with what
 disgust or even horror they were at first received —
 gradually they become familiarized with them,
 and reason, or what by them is called reason,
 will soon be disposed to give them its solemn
 approbation. At this moment, the most trifling
 cause will produce the greatest effect: it is a spark
 which falls upon a mine of gunpowder.

A holy priest of the diocese of Amiens in
 France, named Peter; and from the solitary life
 he led, surnamed the hermit, tired of retirement,
 or prompted by the devotion of the times,

" Vertot, hist. de Malte.

BOOK quitted his cell , and wandered to Jerufalem.

I. His mind fank within him, when , in the moments of fervent piety, he caft his eyes round, and faw the defolation of the holy places. With tears he lamented the circumftance to Simeon , the patriarch of the city, who in the zeal and character of his pilgrim foon difcovered difpofitions , from which poffibly great advantage might be drawn. They often met; and it was finally agreed between them, that Simeon fhould write a letter, descriptive of the melancholy fituation of things, to the bifhop of Rome: this letter the hermit engaged to prefent, and to ftrengthen its contents by all the energy of his own representation. He further promifed to vifit the courts of the European princes , and to rouse them , if poffible, to a general confederation for the relief of Jerufalem. Peter once more bent his knee at the holy fepulchre, and departed full of the great project, with which heaven , he thought, had infpired him. He prefented his difpatches to Urban, and as he had engaged , accompanied them with a pathetic detail of the horrors, his own eyes had witneffed. The effect answered his moft fanguine wifhes : Urban was affected , and on the fpot conceived the defign of fending relief to the chriftians of Paleftine. — Nor did the hermit delay the remaining part of his commiffion. He

travelled from court to court : was every where received as a messenger from heaven ; and the enthusiasm, he himself felt, was easily transfused into the breasts of his hearers. B O O K
I.

Peter was an engine admirably adapted to the work he had undertaken. His zeal was ardent, his disinterestedness exemplary, and a spirit of mortification seemed to hold all his passions under the severest control. His figure, indeed, was rather mean, and his physiognomy unpleasant; but his eye was piercing, and from his lips fell a torrent of impassioned eloquence, which hurried his audience into admiration and conviction. He spoke with the imposing air and authority of an inspired man. The alms that were given him he distributed among the poor; his food was dry bread, and he drank of the crystal stream: his feet were bare, and a single woollen tunic protected him from the inclemencies of various climes. And in all this, historians say, there did not appear the least affectation. Wherever he moved, crowds flocked to see the extraordinary man, and even he was deemed happy who could procure a few hairs from the faithful mule, the companion of his journeys and his toils³⁶.

In 1095 was assembled a council at Clermont in

³⁶ Daniel, Fleury.

B O O K Auvergne, at which Urban presided in person.

I. Disturbances in Italy had compelled him to take refuge in France. In this synod was brought forward the business of the holy land; the pope addressed them in a discourse full of pathetic declamation and of some good sense; and the assembly, with enthusiasm, applauded the proposed undertaking, exclaiming with one voice, *deus lo volt, it is the will of heaven*. The pontiff seized the important moment. "The words you have uttered, said he, were indeed dictated by heaven itself; I read inspiration in them and they shall go with you into battle, to be your comfort and to be the sign, which shall distinguish the true soldiers of the lord." — He then ordered that the figure of a *cross* should be borne on the breasts of those, who should enrol themselves in the sacred warfare; and still better to secure success to his project, (for he knew that enthusiasm was but a transient affection) he had recourse to an expedient, which promised to answer his warmest wishes⁵⁷.

At all times, says the inimitable Fleury, whose reflections and ideas I am ever proud to copy, the pastors of the church had used a discretionary

⁵⁷ Daniel, Fleury.

power in the relaxation of some parts of the canonical penances imposed on sinners, as their fervor, or other circumstances, seemed to require it: but never, before this day, had it been seen that, for one single work of piety, a sinner was discharged from all the temporal punishments, to which he might be liable before the justice of heaven. Urban undertook to do as much as this, when he promised a *plenary indulgence*, that is, a complete releasement from all temporal punishment, to the crusaders. It was an innovation in the discipline of the church, from which many abuses followed.—For more than two centuries, great difficulty had attended the enforcement of the penitentiary canons: In themselves they were very severe, and in process of time, so much had they been multiplied, that almost they might be deemed impracticable. From this circumstance arose the discipline of *commutation*, whereby whole years of penance might be redeemed in a few days. Pilgrimages to Rome, to Compostella, to Jerusalem, entered into this system of commutation; all which acts however were now left far behind by the new project of Urban, which to the meritorious exercise of a wandering life superadded the dreadful perils of war⁵⁸.

⁵⁸ Fleury, disc. 6.

BOOK

I.

In this first expedition, the crusaders were uninfluenced by any sordid motives: they looked for no salary, but what the papal indulgence held out to them.—Great certainly was the expense which attended the march of such numerous armies; but the rich principally defrayed it, whilst even the less wealthy contributed all they could procure, well knowing that the interest it would bring, was more highly to be prized than all human riches.—The sagacious Urban imagined another device, which was no less efficacious. Under the severest censures, he forbade the crusaders to be molested by their creditors, and granted them many other exemptions, whilst they wore the holy cross; and all their possessions, he took into the protection of the holy see.

Such favors would be received with ardor. The nobility feeling a load of crimes, from the pillage of churches, and a long series of rapacity and oppression, eagerly accepted such easy terms of forgiveness: they had only to continue their favorite exercise of war, knowing that, if they fell, they should receive the blooming palm of martyrdom¹⁹.—The commonalty followed the example of their lords indeed, they were their vassals and bound to servitude: but when all that was great and elegant in the provinces was seen hurrying into arms, he must have been

¹⁹ Fleury, *ibid.*

lowly-minded truly; who could have been contented to have staid at home, bent over the anvil, or toiling behind his plough. BOOK
I.

Churchmen, whose pure hands should never be stained with blood, were not excluded from this meritorious service. They also had crimes, which called for expiation, though in strictness of penitentiary discipline, they were not subject to its canons. In some, motives of piety, but in more the love of novelty and dissipation, would preponderate.—Monks, with their abbots, broke from their retirement; threw aside the cowl, and glistened in the burnished helmet.—The softer sex felt a glow of courage rise within their breasts, and they prepared to enter on the toilsome march, in company of their husbands and their lovers.—Europe, in a word, was in general commotion: every eye sparkled with animation: in every town and in every village was heard the din of arms; whilst the crusader, leaning on his sword, uttered words of hardihood, talked of the battles he should win, and of the infidels he should massacre, and of the sins which would be forgiven him.—In all the provinces of France, says Daniel, private hostilities ceased in a moment, the most inveterate enemies became friends; and he that had not money strove to sell his possessions. The scene was astonishing.

B O O K

I.

The principal crusaders were Hugh, brother to the French king; Robert duke of Normandy, brother to William Rufus of England; Stephen count of Blois; Raymond count of Toulouse; Godfrey duke of Lorraine, with his brothers Baldwin and Eustach; with numberless inferior lords, knights, and gentlemen, bishops, abbots, monks, and priests.

By the beginning of 1096, the year after the council, the number of those, who had taken up the cross, was incredible. They assembled round Peter the hermit, whom they regarded as the apostle of the crusade, and as the envoy from heaven. From him they had their orders, and they prepared to march. — The first division, an undisciplined and lawless rabble, was led on by one Walter, a French gentleman of some experience, but of little note. He was followed by the hermit, at the head of forty thousand men. A third division of fifteen thousand proceeded under Gotescalc, a German priest. — Great were the disorders these men committed; the latter division in particular; against whom the insulted people of Hungary rose up in arms, and it is said, not one of the fifteen thousand survived to tell the tale of their catastrophe. — Other bands, still more numerous, followed in wonderful succession, and as their excesses on the march were as great, many of them shared the just fate of their fellows⁶⁶.

⁶⁶ Daniel, Vertot.

A more undisciplined and licentious body of men never drew the sword. In truth, there was but little discipline in the armies of the age, and in those of the crusaders there was still less: they were formed of volunteers from different nations, the chief over whom were independent of one another, and as lawless and licentious as they. The pope's legate alone held supreme command, and his voice, it was vainly expected, would awe into obedience this discordant multitude. Impatient of control, they waited not till they should have put their feet on infidel land, to commence hostilities; wherever they marched, pillage, rapine, devastation marked their progress. They had, indeed, been vainly taught to believe, that heaven, by supernatural assistance, would supply all their necessities, and therefore no provision had been made for subsistence on the march. Finding their wild expectations frustrated, they were even compelled to relieve their wants by plunder; and this it was that enraged the inhabitants of the countries through which they passed. They took their way towards Constantinople, through Hungary and Bulgaria.

The princes, whose names I have mentioned, apprehensive probably lest the greatness itself of the armament should disappoint its own purpose, permitted the multitude to march before

BOOK 1. them, and themselves, by different routes, escorted by the flower of their vassals, advanced towards the seat of the Eastern empire; for that was appointed the place of general rendezvous.

Alexis Comnenus, the Greek emperor, saw them approach with dismay. He had applied indeed to the Western christians for succour against the Turks, but he had only hoped that such a supply would be sent him, as, acting under his control, might enable him to repel the enemy. Astonished he was to see his dominions overwhelmed, on a sudden, by such an inundation of licentious barbarians, who, though they pretended friendship, despised his subjects as unwarlike, and detested them as heretical. By all the arts of policy, in which he excelled, he endeavoured to divert the torrent; but while he employed professions, caresses, civilities, and seeming services towards the leaders of the crusade, he secretly regarded those imperious allies as more dangerous than the open enemies, by whom his empire had been invaded. Whilst the armies were round his capital he daily harassed them by every art, which his genius, his power, or his situation enabled him to employ; and having effected the difficult point of disembarking them in Asia, he entered into a private correspondence

pondence with Soliman, the Turkish emperor, and he practised every insidious device, for disappointing the enterprize, and discouraging the latins from attempting thenceforward any such prodigious migrations. BOOK
I.

On the banks of the Bosphorus, opposite to Constantinople, the generals reviewed their armies, when the number of men was found to amount to one hundred thousand horse, and six hundred thousand foot, including all the attendants of the army. — The advanced parties, under Walter and the hermit, who had imprudently penetrated into the heart of the country, were soon overpowered, and cut to pieces. Peter was absent at Constantinople. — The grand army proceeded on their enterprize with more circumspection: but the scarcity of provisions, the excesses of fatigue, the influence of unexperienced climates, joined to the want of concert in their operations, and to the sword of a warlike enemy, destroyed the adventurers by thousands. Their zeal, however, their bravery, and their irresistible force still carried them forward. — After an obstinate siege, Nice, the seat of the Turkish empire, fell; they defeated Soliman in two great battles; and they sat down before Antioch. After various events, Antioch also surrendered, and the force of the enemy, who till now had proudly resisted, seemed entirely broke.

BOOK

I,

Flushed with success, the champions of the cross advanced towards Jerusalem, which they regarded as the consummation of their labors. By the detachments they had made to secure their conquests, by desertion, and by disasters, their number was reduced to twenty thousand foot, and fifteen hundred horse; but these were still formidable, from their valor, their experience, and the obedience which, from past calamities, they had learned to pay to their leaders. — From the heights which command Jerusalem, they looked down on the holy city, their hearts beat for joy, they forgot their labors, and they demanded, in clamorous shouts, to be led up to the walls, though they were defended by an army of forty thousand men.

In formidable preparation, the generals took their posts round the devoted city; Godfrey of Bouillon, Robert of Normandy, Raymond of Toulouse, Robert of Flanders, and the valiant Tancred. Their resolution was unanimous, to die, or to conquer. Nor was the enemy within the walls less prepared or less determined. The siege lasted five weeks, during which, feats of heroism were achieved, which historians and poets have been careful to record and to magnify. A general assault was finally projected, and with the rising sun the trumpet sounded. It was Friday, the

15th of July, in 1099, till an hour after mid-day, with infinite resolution, the assailants maintained their posts, and the besieged resisted. But human strength could do no more, and Godfrey saw in the countenances of his men, that they despaired of success. They paused; when, on a sudden, the voice of their general sounded in their ears: "My friends, cried he, heaven is for us; see yonder the clouds open, and an armed warrior descends upon the mountain of Olives; his shield darts lightning, and he beckons to us to advance!"—Raymond of Toulouse saw the same vision. "It is St. George, said he, and he calls us to victory."—In a moment every arm was again braced; they reared their ladders, their rams shook the walls, their machines advanced, and Godfrey, sword in hand, was seen upon the ramparts, surrounded by his brave companions. The enemy gave way on all sides, and on all sides entered the victorious champions of the cross.

The carnage and scenes of horror, which now ensued, were, past description, dreadful. Imagination itself is lost in the painful image, and recoils. Neither arms defended the valiant, nor submission the timorous: no age or sex was spared. The streets of Jerusalem were covered with dead bodies. — But the triumphant warriors, after every enemy was

B O O K

I.

subdued and slaughtered, immediately turned themselves, with sentiments of humiliation and contrition, towards the holy sepulchre. Without quitting their bloody armour, they advanced with reclined bodies, and with naked feet, to that sacred monument. They were met, with hymns of jubilation, by the christians they had rescued, and with them they sang anthems to their Saviour, who had there purchased their salvation by his agony and death. Enlivened by the presence of the place, devotion so overcame all their martial fury, that they dissolved in tears, and bore the appearance of every soft and tender sentiment. So inconsistent is human nature with itself! and so easily do all the passions ally, superstition especially and enthusiasm, with heroic courage, and fierce barbarity!

Eight days after this great event, Godfrey of Bouillon was unanimously chosen king of Jerusalem. Among all the warriors he was the most eminent: courage, wisdom, martial skill, probity, religion, prudence, strength of body, and a stature which awed the beholder, marked him for a hero, and united all the suffrages in his favor. For one year only he held this romantic sceptre with a dignity, which the hand of Godfrey alone could have given to it: he died, and was lamented. — The other princes, having performed their vows returned in haste to Europe, where neglected

vassals, and the important concerns of state, had long bewailed their absence “^{B O O K}
^{I.}

Thus ended the first crusade. — In whatever light it be considered, whether as an object of religion or of policy, I can discover no one permanent advantage that was derived from it. Jerusalem, indeed, was taken; the christian inhabitants would be protected, and future pilgrims would approach the holy places in more security. To the superstition of the age these might be weighty benefits; and who will say that, as such, they might not value them? Still their greatest advantages, it seems, should vanish, when contrasted with their concomitants, the direful events of war. But this also is a reflection to which, I know not, that the christians of the eleventh century would have subscribed.

From a redundancy of population, as Europe then was circumstanced, had, in great measure, arisen that excess of vice and lawless dissipation, which I described; and it was natural to imagine that the vast armies which marched to the East would be principally composed of the refuse of society; hence would the community at large be benefited. — So it happened, and not one, in a hundred ever saw again his native land; but this one, together with the vices he had taken with

[“] Vertot, Fleury, Daniel, Hume, from original authors.

BOOK I. him, returned loaded with all those which the Eastern nations were best able to supply. On the other hand, was the loss of so many brave, honest, and virtuous man, who fell sacrifice to the phrenzy of the times, to weigh as nothing in the scale of reason? — The intestine feuds, indeed, which so long had desolated Europe, ceased, for a moment, in their dread career, while the blood of infidels was pouring out round the walls of Jerufalem: but soon they resumed their wonted fury, and raged as before.

Asia was then the seat of the arts, of learning, and of commerce; and from thence, in process of time, Europe was to draw the most substantial benefits. In the first crusade these were not perceptible; nor could they be: but a channel, it must be owned, was then opened, through which, in a stream at first but small, they might begin to flow towards the Western world. The politicians of the age had not this object, I believe, in view: but is it from the foresight of man or not rather from what appears to us a fortuitous concurrence of circumstances, that the most substantial advantages have been derived on human kind?

END OF THE FIRST BOOK.

T H E

H I S T O R Y

O F T H E L I V E S O F

A B E I L L A R D and H E L O I S A.

B O O K II.

Abeillard goes to Laon and studies under Anselm — Returns to Paris and teaches. — Heloisa — Abeillard becomes her master — She escapes with him into Britany — He offers to marry her — They are married — He conveys her to Argenteuil — Fulbert's revenge — Pascal II. pope of Rome — France and England — Religious orders — Cluni — The Chartreuse — Fontevraud.

Anno, 1100.

FROM the contentious scenes of war and politics, on which the pride of history loves to dwell, I return, with pleasure, to the more humble walk of biography. Thus the traveller, who, on the glaciers of Grindelwald or Chamoigny, has contemplated nature in her sublimest horrors, sinks to

B O O K
II.

B O O K

II.

the vale below with gentler emotions, where he meets the creeping woodbine and the purling stream.

He goes to
Laon and
studies under
Anselm.

The reader will recollect that he left Abeillard, just returned from Britany to Paris, rather disgusted of philosophical pursuits, and preparing to enter on the more important study of theology. His old master and competitor de Champeaux, elated with the new honors of the mitre, had withdrawn to Chalons.

Laon, an episcopal see, distant twenty-seven leagues from Paris, was at this time celebrated for its chair of divinity. There Anselm, a canon and dean of the chapter, had for many years taught, with the greatest applause: men of the first consequence in the church had been his scholars¹. In this number must be reckoned de Champeaux himself. Abeillard looking round for a master, from whom he might draw some instruction in the new pursuit he was meditating, naturally fixed on Anselm. Independently of other considerations, the circumstance of his having taught the bishop of Chalons, would have some weight on his mind. The man we contend with, and conquer, is seldom deemed a contemptible antagonist. — He went to Laon.

“ I frequented, says he, the old man’s school,
“ but it was soon evident, that all his celebrity was

¹ Notæ ad hist. Cal.

“ derived, not from the display of abilities, but
 “ from length of practice. He who approached
 “ him in anxious uncertainty, returned in a
 “ thicker cloud. To hear him was delightful;
 “ for he possessed an astonishing fluency of lan-
 “ guage; but in his words was neither reason nor
 “ common sense. You would have thought he
 “ were kindling a fire, when instantly the whole
 “ house was filled with smoke, in which not a
 “ single spark was visible. He was a tree, covered
 “ with a thick foliage, which to the distant eye
 “ had charms; but on a nearer inspection there
 “ was no fruit to be found. I went up to this
 “ tree in full expectation: my eye beheld that it
 “ was the fig-tree, which the Lord had cursed;
 “ or I said it might be the oak with which the
 “ poet compares Pompey,

B O O K
 II.

“ Stat magni nominis umbra,
 “ Qualis frugifero quercus sublimis in agro.

“ LUCAN. Phar.

“ And after this discovery, I reposed not many
 “ days under its noxious shade.”

The portrait is strongly taken, but resentment probably pressed on the pencil in the darker coloring.

Of this same Anselm a curious anecdote is told by an old author¹, which, as it may serve to

¹ Hist. Cal.

² Notæ ad hist. Cal.

BOOK mark the character of the age, I shall relate. —

II. A considerable part of the gold and jewels, belonging to the church of Laon, had been stolen. The thief could not be discovered; whereupon a general meeting of the canons and principal citizens was called. Uncertain what to do, they unanimously agreed to take the opinion of Anselm, who was esteemed the oracle of the town. Anselm, deeply versed in the law and prophets, revolves the whole business in his mind, and recollects at last the passage in the book of Joshua, where it is related, in what manner, a secret theft had been detected by the casting of lots. “It is my advice,” said he, having weighed the matter most deliberately, “that you try to discover the author of this horrid crime by the *ordeal* of water. Let an infant be taken from each parish, and cast into a vessel of holy water: from the child which sinks, will the guilty parish be known. Then from each house of this parish take another infant: which will show you the guilty house. You can be no longer at a loss: throw every man and woman belonging to the house into tubs of holy water, and guilt will be concealed no longer.” The experiment, I presume, succeeded; for the same author relates that the thief was a person, by name also Anselm, who, under the cloak of extraordinary piety, had imposed on many, and to whose care had been intrusted the rich ornaments of the church.

Abeillard, whom the emptiness of this wordy veteran could not fail to disgust, began to appear less frequently at his lectures. It was a more prudent step, than to have attempted a direct attack on the great name of his master. Age had given some check to the petulancy of his temper, or by experience he had learned wisdom. His absence however from the schools was soon noticed; it was construed by those, among the scholars, who plumed themselves most on their abilities, into a reflection on their own discernment. He dares to undervalue the great Anselm, said they. The old man was himself irritable and jealous : he had instructed the brightest geniuses of the age, and been admired by them: was this child of Aristotle alone to withhold his applause, just as his sun, with its full effulgence, was setting in the West! The suggestions of the young men, whose pride was also piqued, only served to fan into a wilder flame the indignation of the old professor*.

It happened that, as one day the scholars were jokingly conversing together, one of them asked Abeillard, what he thought about the study of the scriptures? The question was captious, as they well knew, how little attention he had hitherto given to those divine books. He replied that, if religious improvement be the object, no study

* Hist. Calam.

B O O K

II.

certainly was so salutary ; but added that , to him it was matter of great surprise , how any one , who had the smallest pretensions to literature , could possibly imagine that , besides the scriptures themselves and some easy expositor , any other assistance should be deemed necessary to render them most perfectly intelligible. — The proposition was received with scorn , and insultingly they asked Abeillard , whether he perhaps might think himself equal to the undertaking. “ I am ready to do it , said he ; chuse what book , you please , from the old or new testament , one that is rarely explained in the schools , and with it allow me but a single commentator. ” — It was instantly agreed to , and they fixed on the prophecy of Ezekiel ’.

The next morning he acquainted the young men , that he was prepared to fulfil his engagement. His friends advised him to be less precipitate ; they told him he was a novice in theology ; and that he should proceed , in so arduous an undertaking , with the greatest circumspection and leisure. “ It is not by leisure , answered he angrily , but by energy of genius , that I pretend to master the great heights of science : either I will be heard when , and in what manner , it pleases me best , or , this moment , I am free from my engagement. ”

’ Hist. Calam.

But few were present at the first lecture: the attempt was deemed both arrogant and ridiculous. He acquitted himself, however, so much to the satisfaction of his hearers, that they requested he would proceed, and they complimented him on the precision and sublimity of his comment. The following days, the whole town pressed to hear him; every word he uttered was carefully taken down; and, as it had before happened at Melun and Paris, the streets of Laon echoed with the name of Abeillard*.

The sound soon reached the ears of Anselm. His mind, for some days, had been cruelly on the fret: this youth, whose hours in the study of divinity hardly measured his years of practice, in one single night, had penetrated into the obscure mysteries of Ezekiel, and had drawn that veil aside, which himself perhaps had not dared to touch. The circumstance was insulting, and he vowed revenge. But though pious minds can be sometimes swayed by the passions of sinners, they are wonderfully adroit at the discovery of motives, which, to their own eyes, at least, may sanctify their proceedings.

Anselm had, amongst his scholars, two, whom he particularly esteemed, and whose abilities were superior to the rest, Albericus, a native of Rheims, and Lotulphus, from Novara in Lombardy; which

* Hist. Calam.

B O O K

II.

place however was rendered far more famous for giving birth to Peter bishop of Paris, the celebrated *master of sentences*. These men, buoyed up by a sense of their own superiority and the flattering approbation of Anselm, would feel more poignantly the burst of applause, which, in a moment, had raised Abeillard far above them. It was their advice, that the expositor of Ezekiel should be interdicted from proceeding any further in his public comment. — The old man acceded joyfully to their proposal. He alone was theological in Laon, and without his permission no one could be empowered to give lectures. The prohibition was notified to Abeillard, under this pretext that, should any error, peradventure, creep into the exposition of the prophecy, which, (from his inexperience in theology, might too easily happen) the whole blame would be imputed to Anselm; that he could not expose the whole glory of a well-earned reputation upon so slippery a surface; and that religion, in a secret whisper, had told him to be circumspect.

The scholars, who patronised Abeillard, heard the news of this event with indignation; the thin veil which covered the real motives of Anselm's conduct was easily penetrated; but all opposition, they saw, would be vain. Abeillard resolved to withdraw; Laon was not a theatre wide enough for the display of his abilities, and the grey hairs of the theologal called for some respect. Anselm

triumphed in his success; even the day, on which, by his conjuring sagacity, he had proved his name-sake to be a sacrilegious robber, was not half so glorious⁷. BOOK
II.

As the memoirs, from which the story of the life of Abeillard is principally drawn, were written by himself, and that after, by a series of misfortunes and ill-usage, he had been severely irritated, some allowance should be made for partial narration. For however little disposed he might really be to depart from truth, it is too obvious, that objects take their tinge from the complexion of our own minds. In an instant how changed is the scene, when to the varied beauties of the rising sun succeed murky clouds and a lowering sky! It must also be confessed that the conduct of the young man was often reprehensible. His abilities were of a superior cast, and he was gifted with a penetration, which at once laid open to his eye the whole texture of character: from this he selected the weakest parts, and he took a malignant pleasure in exhibiting them to public view. Such a man could hardly have a friend, for he seemed to have no indulgence for the weaknesses of human nature. Himself had not yet experienced how low the greatest minds may sink. Unremittingly he had pursued the object of his ambition, and this was of a nature only to draw into action those

⁷ Hist. Calam.

BOOK

II.

powers of his soul, which were pure and intellectual. From this circumstance he would deem highly of himself, and viewing others in the same medium, them naturally he might despise. The judgment of youth is often erroneous.

He returns
to Paris and
teaches.

Abeillard once more returned to Paris. Fame had not been silent during his residence at Laon; it was known with what splendor he had opened his new career; theology had woven a garland to encircle his brows; his friends were waiting to receive him; and the doors of the schools stood open. He began his lectures with the prophecy of Ezekiel, completing the exposition he had commenced in the country. His auditors were charmed; the first philosopher, they said, was become the first divine. Multitudes of fresh scholars flowed in from all quarters: he therefore judged proper to resume his old lecture of philosophy*. The sister sciences were pleased with this amiable union; they had too long been kept asunder from each other; and both from the mouth of Abeillard received new strength and new charms.

In the following words does a contemporary speak of these times in a letter addressed to Abeillard: "No distance of country, no height
" of mountains, no depth of vallies, no intricate
" journey beset with perils and thieves, could with-
" hold your scholars from you. Rome sent her
" children

* Hist. Calam.

“ children to receive your instruction : she who had
 “ been the mistress of every science now confessed
 “ her inferiority. The youth of Britain crowding
 “ to their shores were not intimidated by the sea
 “ which met their eyes, or the billows that broke
 “ at their feet: in spite of danger, they cleared
 “ the dreadful pass. The more remote islands
 “ dismissed their savage sons. Germany, Spain,
 “ Flanders, the people of the North and of the
 “ South, flocked to you; in their mouths your
 “ name only was heard; they admired, they
 “ praised, they extolled your abilities. I speak
 “ not of those whom the walls of Paris enclosed,
 “ nor of the inhabitants of our neighbouring or
 “ more distant provinces: from you they as ardently
 “ sought for wisdom, as if all its treasures had been
 “ there locked up. In a word, moved by the
 “ splendor of your genius, by the charms of your
 “ elocution, and by the acuteness of your penetra-
 “ tion, to you they all approached, as to the
 “ source from which science flowed in the purest
 „ stream ”

But the theology of the times consisted in little
 else than a bare exposition of scripture-passages;
 a method however, by which, had it been
 pursued in a cool and rational manner, religion
 might have gained much. It would not have
 been loaded with that superfluity of idle matter,

* Fulco ad Abeil. p. 218.

BOOK

XI.

which has disfigured its native simplicity; and to which an undue importance has ever been given. The commentators of the twelfth century were not satisfied with a plain and literal explanation of the text: they thought that, under each line, lay something of a spiritual or mystical meaning, and of this they were ever in quest. It was the bad taste of the age, to which unadorned simplicity could give no pleasure: or else the literal sense was to their apprehension peculiarly difficult, from their ignorance of the primitive languages, in which the books of scripture were written; and because they knew so little of the history and of the manners of ancient times. What we do not understand is the more susceptible of a mystic interpretation, and rather than own our ignorance, what absurdities will not be advanced¹¹?

From the licentiousness of allegorical exposition any maxims might be drawn. They read in the gospel of St. Luke, that our Saviour, before his passion, told his disciples, that swords would be necessary: they answered, behold here are two swords. He replied; it is enough. — The sense of this passage is obvious; but commentators discovered that, by the two swords were signified the spiritual and temporal powers, by which the world is governed; and that these powers belonged both to the church, because the two swords were in the hands of the apostles.

¹¹ Fleury, disc. 5.

The church indeed, they said, should herself only exercise the spiritual power, and intrust the other to the prince. Our saviour said to Peter; put up thy sword into the scabbard; that is, the sword, Peter, is thine; but it is not in thy hand it should be used; give it to the Prince, who shall employ it, as thou shalt order and direct". — On such deductions as these was grounded the deposing doctrine of Rome, and all the vain superstructure of prerogative and privilege, which the church exercised, with an unbounded sway, through the long period of many years.

B O O K

II.

In the full blow of literary honors, which the breath of envy did not attempt to blast, and secure in the applause of an admiring public, the days of Abeillard now flowed on in one unruffled stream. The same tide brought wealth and glory with it. But as rivalry and opposition ceased, so, on his side ceased those vigorous exertions, which had made him what he was. The nervous system, I have elsewhere observed, upon the tone of which all our animation depends, soon relaxes, when the spur is withdrawn that excited its vibrations; and when this happens, a languor ensues, with which the whole man sympathizes in wonderful accord. — Affections began to rise, to which hitherto he had been a stranger and he found he was not that hero, which, in vanity of mind, he had once imagined.

G 2

" Fleury, disc. 5.

BOOK

II.

Even Hercules, in the gay court of Omphale, threw down his club, and submitted to hold the distaff.

Paris was, at this time, a scene of general dissipation: it was so, as the principal residence of the French court, and as an academy crowded with the youth of different nations. No discipline could have held such an unruly multitude in control. The description, which historians give of the vice and depravity of the scholars, can only be conceived by viewing modern seminaries of learning. — Abeillard, in the midst of this alluring scene, would hardly withstand its fascination. He was young, handsome, agreeable. The splendor of his public character, as it drew on him the eye of admiration, so was it a passport, which admitted him into the first circles of Paris. His company was eagerly sought for: he charmed in conversation; the tone of his voice was melodious; he sang well, and his songs were often pieces of his own composition¹².

Speaking of himself at this period, he says: “It is in the lap of prosperity that the mind swells with foolish vanity; its vigor is enervated by repose, while the indulgence of pleasure completes the victory. At a time, when I thought myself the first philosopher in Europe, nor feared to be disturbed in my seat of eminence, then it was, that I who had been a pattern of virtue, first loosened the

¹² Ep. Helois. 12.

“rein at the call of passion. In proportion as
 “I had risen higher on the scale of literary
 “excellence, the lower did I sink into vicious
 “depravity. I quitted those paths of virtue,
 “which all my predecessors had trodden with
 “so much renown. Pride and pleasure were the
 “monsters that subdued me.” — In this
 situation of undisturbed repose, of dissipation, and
 of honor, Abeillard had passed near five years,
 extolled as the first master of the age, courted
 by the great, loved by the gay, feared by the
 ignorant, and admired by all.

B O O K

II.

There was then in Paris a young lady, of great
 beauty, but whom her talents and extraordinary
 advance in science, rendered an object of general
 admiration. She was in the richest bloom of
 youth, having reached her eighteenth year¹¹;
 a period, when the mind, if properly cultivated,
 begins to expand on the countenance, and to
 give it an expression which it had not before.
 Heloisa, for this was the young lady's name,
 lived; with her uncle Fulbert, a canon of the
 cathedral church. — By some she is said to have
 been descended from the illustrious house of
 Montmorency; whilst others pretend, she was
 the natural daughter of a priest¹². — Be this as
 it may; nature had formed her of her best
 materials, and she was the darling of her uncle.

Heloisa.

¹¹ Hist. Calam. ¹² Vie d'Abeil. p. 48. ¹³ Bayle, letter H.

B O O K

II.

The old man had spared no expense in the education of his niece. In other regards niggardly, here he was profuse; and whatever, in the literary arts of the age, the best masters had to give, that he endeavoured to procure for Heloisa. — She is represented as a prodigy in science: but it should seem as if her encomiasts, willing to delineate a phenomenon in the female world, had brought together every excellence their minds could fancy, and had presented the rich gift to the niece of Fulbert. It was not only in the circles of Paris, they say, that her name was familiar: It had penetrated to the extreme parts of the kingdom¹⁶. — When learning is possessed by few, a very ordinary portion is viewed with admiration. We may judge by comparison; and can it be presumed that, in the gloomy era of the twelfth century, even to Heloisa science would have unlocked those treasures, which the female candidates of modern times would perhaps ask of her in vain? She was acquainted, it is said, with the best authors of ancient Rome, had been deeply initiated in the philosophy of the age, and knew what the wise men of antiquity had taught. The Latin and Greek languages were familiar to her, and even rising from the cradle, she had been heard to lisp the psalms of David, in the very language of their royal author¹⁷. — When retirement and the appli-

¹⁶ Præf. Apologet.¹⁷ Ibid.

cation of maturer years had given full improvement to her mind; I doubt not, but she became possessed of all these high accomplishments, which at the age of eighteen, the generosity of anticipation seems to have bestowed upon her. — She was born in the first or second year of the century.

Abeillard, though become a man of pleasure, had not lost that delicacy of mind, which is sometimes so constitutional, as to remain with us even in the absence of virtue. He had ever detested low vice, and the company of abandoned women was peculiarly odious to him¹⁸. Public dissipation was incompatible with the dignity of his station; nor could his attendance on the schools permit him to frequent the society of those ladies, who would not, he thinks, have been insensible to the charms of his person and conversation.

It was at this moment of self-complacency and enervation, that began his acquaintance with the accomplished Heloisa. The house, where her uncle resided, was contiguous to the public schools. Doubtless he had often seen her, and often heard of her uncommon abilities; but till now such objects were little calculated to make a sensible impression. In the retired situation and amiable qualities of this young lady, he soon discovered all that his heart could wish for. That he himself was irresistible, he had the fullest conviction. “So

¹⁸ Hist. Calam.

BOOK II. "great, says he, was my reputation, and so
 "captivating the attractions of my youth and
 "person, that I feared not to be rejected by any
 "woman, whom I should deign to honor with
 "my regard." Yet was not this vain philosopher
 very distant from his fortieth year.

Besides these personal attractions, there were other circumstances, which might seem no less flattering. He well knew the progress Heloisa had made in learning, and how warmly her soul was engaged in the pursuit. Could he draw her into a correspondence of letters, (a proposal which he doubted not she would embrace with ardor,) he foresaw every success in the event. Then he could flatter her vanity with less danger of suspicion: he could, with more freedom and in stronger colors, express the emotions of his heart; and though her company might be sometimes denied him, he could by this intercourse, at least, keep alive the impression on her mind¹⁹. The plan was concerted. — But it is not said how long this correspondence lasted, nor is it said, whether he was admitted to any private interview with her. Heloisa would be delighted by the marked attention of this great man; nor from inexperience and from the high opinion she had of him, could she, for a moment, suspect his intentions. Abeillard must have recoiled when he viewed the infamy of his design: it could not possibly be that, at once, he

¹⁹ Hist. Calam.

should embark in a fixed scheme of seduction. He says it however himself in words which cannot be mistaken ²⁰; and if so, he must be pronounced a much worse man, than otherwise I could be disposed to believe him. In the high regions of romantic speculation he had lost sight of, or never known, those amiable virtues, without which the greatest talents may be deemed a curse from the hand of providence.

Warmed by acquaintance and the intercourse of sentiment, to which the unguarded innocence of Heloisa would give additional charms, the affections of Abeillard grew into passion. He that should have been her friend, became her lover; and the reserve and distant correspondence, he had hitherto maintained, could satisfy no longer. He meditated other schemes; but, had his intentions been honorable, where was the necessity of disguise? Fulbert would have opened his doors, and have been proud in the society of Abeillard.

The philosopher well imagined, that the respect, produced by the great celebrity of his name, with which the young lady received his addresses, would gradually wear down into a more familiar behaviour, could he have the happiness of seeing her, and of conversing with her more frequently ²¹; and his invention hit on a scheme, which proved him a finished master in the art of seduction. — He began to show great attention to some of Fulbert's

²⁰ Hist. Calam. ²¹ Ibid.

BOOK II. friends; and when he thought them secure, he opened to them his wishes, which were, that they would propose to the good man to take him into his house as a boarder. Its being so near to the schools, he said, would be a great conveniency; that he should not hesitate upon terms, however high they might be; that the bustle and solicitude, necessarily attendant on house-keeping, deranged that equanimity, which study called for; and that his expenses were heavier than he could conveniently support. Fulbert, he knew, was very fond of money; and as the first of his desires was to procure for his niece every means for her further improvement, he trusted, that his proposal, coming in so eligible a form, would not be rejected²². — The old canon swallowed the bait with eagerness. Money, and with it the prospect of benefiting Heloisa, accorded with all the feelings of his heart. It was no trifling circumstance neither, that Abeillard should put his foot over his threshold, and that he should be permitted to sit down at table with a man, whom the world admired. Thus vanity, which never dies in the human breast, hung her bias also on the side of his ruling passions.

Of Fulbert an anecdote is recorded, which proves his piety to have been equal to his affection for money and for Heloisa. — The almoner of Henry, the French king, infligated by an inordinate devo-

²² Hist. Calam.

tion, had stolen from the chapel of his master, a large portion of the back-bone of Saint Ebrulfus. Among the first friends of this thief was canon Fulbert, and to prove to him the excess of his love, he made him a present of what he esteemed dearest in the world, this holy relic. Fulbert had had it long in his possession, when hearing probably by what iniquitous means it had been procured, he feared to detain it any longer. He assembled his friends, proposed the important business, and earnestly besought their advice. They agreed the back bone had been stolen, and could not with a safe conscience be kept; the prior of a neighbouring convent was therefore sent for; to him was committed the sacred treasure with injunction, that he should forthwith convey it, my author says, to Utica, but I suppose to the chapel from whence it had been taken. This at least the principle of restitution should have suggested²³.

When Abeillard had obtained the old man's permission to remove to his house, the first thing the latter proposed to him was, that he would take some charge of his niece. The philosopher assented. That he would dedicate much of his time to her instruction, seemed an unreasonable request: finally, however, he entreated him that, should he have any vacant moments after his return from school, either by night or day, then

²³ Oderic. l. 7. Hist. Eccl.

B O O K he would give to Heloisa; and still to evince how
 11. much he prized his instruction, it was his request, he said, that should he find her negligent or inattentive, he would chastise her severely.

“ Viewing this simplicity of the uncle , I was
 “ not less astonished, observes Abeillard, than if I
 “ had beheld a shepherd intrusting his lamb to the
 “ care of a hungry wolf. He committed his niece
 “ to me, to be taught, and to be corrected , as
 “ I pleased ; which, in fact , was supplying me
 “ with every occasion, not only of gaining her
 “ affections, but likewise with a power of forcing
 “ her, by chastisement, to comply with my de-
 “ sires, should persuasion prove ineffectual. But
 “ there were two considerations , with which all
 “ suspicion of evil was incompatible ; the love he
 “ felt for Heloisa , and the opinion he entertained
 “ of my virtue.” — The base seducer felt not
 himself the weight of these motives. Fulbert might
 have been simple; but it was a simplicity which
 did honor to his heart. Suspicion never dwells
 in an honest mind. I am almost tempted to
 believe that the stigma of covetousness had been
 fixed on Fulbert by the hand of inveterate
 resentment.

The agitation and joy of mind, felt by Heloisa,
 when she heard who the stranger was that was
 coming to reside under her uncle's roof , will
 be easily conceived. To the high opinion same

²⁴ Hist. Cal.

had long impressed on her mind, was now joined a more intimate acquaintance with the man; she had conversed with him, and she had received letters from his hand, at once expressive of affection and of the idea he entertained of her abilities. This Abeillard was now to be her master, and she was to enjoy his society in the ease of domestic intercourse. For an instant, she could not suspect him capable of any interested or insidious views: such thoughts are, at least, inconsistent with the candid innocence of youth. She saw him arrive with such emotions as, the state of mind I have described, would naturally raise; but the moment, which Heloisa viewed as the brightest of her life, was, in fact, clouded with the lowering decrees of fate!

As the base designs of Abeillard had been maturely projected, he would proceed to their accomplishment by all those means which circumstances offered, and with an artifice, that well knew how to avail itself of the most trifling incident. The sagacious logician who had foiled the first masters of the art, at their own weapons, now entered the lists with a girl of eighteen: it was a noble contest! — The gradations from respect to love, through all their intermediate shades, would be sensibly marked on the soul of Heloisa, and Abeillard would read them on her countenance. — He very minutely, and with little delicacy, details the circumstances of their studious hours,

B O O K
II.

Abeillard becomes her master.

BOOK
II.

and he tells the progress his pupil soon made in the art of love²⁵. Indeed, the most tried virtue could not have withstood this powerful ordeal. Heloisa began to love; and from a combination of incidents, joined to a natural cast of dispositions, such a strength of passion took possession of her soul, as the wild annals of romance have never, I believe, equalled.

Abeillard now lost all relish for the schools; Aristotle and scripture-comments could please no longer. His lessons were but a repetition of what he had said before, and even these were delivered with an indifference, a precipitancy, and a visible absence of mind, which showed that his attention was engaged on other objects²⁶. — His genius, however, was not absolutely idle. As he often quotes the Latin poets, it is probable that he took delight in their compositions: I have also already remarked, that he was not himself without some pretensions to poetry. Whatever talents he might have, the present moment would be sure to call them into play. Love makes poets of us all. For, as the seat of that passion lies chiefly in the imagination, it is natural that those ideas should please best, which are in unison with it. Absent from Heloisa, his employment was to celebrate her praises: he composed sonnets, laid his sonnets at her feet, and he sang them to the tenderest airs²⁷.

²⁵ Hist. Calam. ²⁶ Ibid. ²⁷ Ep. Cal. Ep. Helois. 1^a.

Many years after, thus does Heloisa speak of these times, of Abeillard, and of his compositions: warm with the recollection she says to him: " You possessed, Abeillard, two qualifications, a tone of voice and a grace in singing, which gave you the control over every female heart. These powers were peculiarly yours; for I know not that they ever fell to the lot of any other philosopher. To soften, by playful amusement, the stern labors of philosophy, you composed several sonnets on love and on similar subjects. These you were often heard to sing, when the harmony of your voice gave new charms to the beauty of your language. In all circles only Abeillard was talked of: even the most ignorant, who could not judge of composition, were enchanted by the melody of your voice. Female hearts could not withstand the impression. Thus was my name soon carried to distant nations, for our loves were the theme of all your songs. Women envied my happiness: they saw you were endowed with every accomplishment of mind and body ²⁸. "

These poems, as they were handed about, and continued to be very fashionable songs, even in countries remote from Paris, were written probably in the rude language of the times: But from the pen of genius, nothing truly

²⁸ Ep. Helois. 1^a.

B O O K can fall which may seem rude and uncultivated.

II. We have to lament, however, that these compositions of Abeillard have all sunk in the devouring stream of time: I have otherwise no doubt, but the French nation would have them to boast of, as the elegant maiden-productions of their earliest muse. — The Trouveres in the northern provinces, and the more elegant Troubadours in the south, had not then attuned their reeds to sing the loves and the martial prowess of peerless lords and ladies. — The *roman de la rose* is by some critics ascribed to Abeillard, but with no semblance of truth: indeed, it is generally admitted, that it was begun in the thirteenth century, and finished by John de Meun, the gay poet of the court of Philip le bel, a hundred years after²².

Abeillard's scholars viewed, with sentiments of regret and pity, the falling off of their master. It was an effect, however, for which they could easily account, because, from his entrance into the house of Fulbert, they had noticed its progress. His fair pupil, they said, was the Dalila that had broken the strength of Samson. Fortunately, however, there was no de Champeaux to glory in his fall. — His connexion with Heloisa could be no longer secret: it became the topic of general conversation. Fulbert alone

²² Præf. Apologet. Bayle, letter A.

seemed ignorant of it; even when he was advised to look to his niece, he disregarded the admonition. His love for her, and his opinion of Abeillard, had tied a bandage over his eyes, which no suggestions could unbind. — Thus, for some months, did the deception continue; and the lovers were unmolested in their literary amours. Sometimes, that the old man might not be roused by the smallest shadow of suspicion, Abeillard assumed the tone of a master, and even pretended to chastise Heloisa, as he had been empowered to do³⁰.

The clap of thunder came at last; the bandage fell off; and poor Fulbert saw how miserably he had been deceived. It was a situation of deep distress. The man, in whose breast, he thought, resided all the virtues, had betrayed him, and Heloisa was corrupted! His heart sank within him. When he had a little recovered from the shock, his request was, that the seducer would leave his house. Too much broken was his heart to indulge itself in the strong emotions of anger or revenge. Abeillard says, that he only grieved³¹. But he describes more fully, and with some affectation, the parting scene betwixt himself and Heloisa. How excessive was their affliction, he says; how much he blushed; how his heart was torn, when he saw the tears of the dear girl; what a storm agitated her mind

BOOK

II.

³⁰ Hist. Calam.

³¹ Ibid.

BOOK II. at the view of his sufferings; that they wailed not their own misery; it was for one another only that they lamented. — Abeillard withdrew, and Heloisa remained to meet the reproaches of her uncle, and in solitude to reflect on the state into which she was fallen.

But the reproaches of Fulbert fell heaviest on himself: it was to his own wilful blindness he had to charge the misconduct of his niece. Abeillard's treachery, indeed, was too foul a crime ever to be forgiven, yet even here how glaring had been his own folly! — Heloisa felt for the painful situation of her uncle, to whose care she owed so much; but in the love she bore to Abeillard was sunk every other thought, which reflection might have suggested. Conscience is silent, when the ruling passion, with sovereign control, holds possession of the heart. Her attachment to books, reverence for Fulbert, ideas of religion, respect for the world, delicacy of female character, were all absorbed in the admiration of the man, who had seduced her.

She escapes
with him into
Britany.

Fable informs us, that Argus, with a hundred eyes, could not guard the nymph that was committed to his charge. Love inspires a fortitude, accompanied by a wiliness of invention, which no obstacle can withstand. Heloisa contrived to acquaint her lover with all the particulars of her situation; and she acquainted him, with a triumph of mind that expressed the peculiarity of

her character, that she was pregnant, and must instantly have his advice in the course it might be proper for her to take; that her uncle's house was no longer a fit situation for her ³².

The necessity of removing her was evident; but, considering the suspicious jealousy with which she was guarded, the step would be attended with great hazard. Abeillard never found his invention on a severer rack; but as he corresponded with Heloisa, who informed him of all that passed, he had reason to rely on her address for success in the attempt. By a show of resignation to the will of Fulbert, his vigilance began to slacken: Heloisa therefore gave notice that soon she should be able to escape. It was agreed between the lovers, that he should procure her a proper disguise, and that, the first dark evening her uncle should be from home, she would be ready to attend him. They were to make for Britany, where he had friends who would receive her. — The day came. Fulbert, lulled into security, had engaged to make a visit into the country, and was not to return till late. Of this fortunate event, notice was instantly given ³³.

The tedious hours passed away, and night fell. Abeillard, with the disguise he had procured, which was a nun's habit ³⁴, was waiting at the appointed place: He received Heloisa into his arms; conveyed her out of Paris; and with all

³² Hist. Cal. ³³ Vie d'Abeil. p. 63. ³⁴ Ep. Abeil. 5^a.

BOOK

II.

possible expedition, proceeded towards Britany, where his sister Dionysia, who had been apprized of the design, was ready to give them an asylum¹⁵. — Having thus disposed of his charge, the philosopher hastened back to Paris.

Fulbert, finding his niece had escaped, and suspecting what the cause was which had impelled her to it, was driven into the wildest rage. To his grief and first pain, was now added the sentiment of disgrace, which was brought on his family. But what to do, or how to revenge the insult, he was equally uncertain. When, in the paroxysm of his fury, he thought of the most signal vengeance, and only looked to the dagger as his friend; the recollection of his dear Heloise rose full before him, and averted the bloody purpose. She was in the hands of his enemies, who might retaliate perhaps the fatal stroke which should fall on Abeillard. — When, in cooler moments, he projected forcibly to seize the traitor, and to confine him in some place of security, he soon discovered how foolish the attempt would be: Abeillard, he heard, was surrounded by his creatures, was prepared against any attack, and was even ready himself to strike the first blow, should the smallest violence be intended against him¹⁶. — Again the old man had recourse to tears, and the unavailing suggestions of impotent passion.

¹⁵ Hist. Calam.¹⁶ Ibid.

Heloisa, in the mean time, was delivered of a son, whom she called Astrolabus. The motive for so whimsical a name is not assigned; but probably, as her own name was said to bear some reference to the sun, she thought proper to allude to the stars in giving a name to her child.

The news of this event had a happy effect on the mind of Abeillard; it softened the high tone he had hitherto taken; and he began to view, in a more proper light, the sufferings of Fulbert, and his own misconduct towards him. "I felt, indeed, for his situation, says he, and my shameful abuse of his confidence struck me on the heart." In these sentiments he waited on him; he asked his forgiveness; and he offered any reparation, which he would please to call for. — The old man listened, but his heart had been too much hardened by ill-usage to relent so soon. Abeillard proceeded: "And can you, indeed, be surprised at what has happened, when you reflect on the charms of Heloisa? I am a man, Sir; and he that will cast his eyes over the annals of mortality will find, that the greatest sages of ancient times were made but the sport of women. He only will not plead for me, who knows not the power of love." — The eyes of Fulbert grew fuller. — "I will marry Heloisa, said Abeillard, if that will give you satisfaction; but it must be on condition, that you divulge it not. My honor, my situation in the world

BOOK
II.

He offers to
marry her.

B O O K

II.

“ exact this from me.” — The proposal was unexpected, and a beam of joy seemed to spread over the old man’s countenance. He was silent for a moment; then he looked Abeillard in the face, to see if his words were painted there; then he took hold of his hand; an action, which at once said that he forgave him, and that he should have Heloisa.”

The friends, who were present, witnessed what had passed, and after mutual embraces, they parted. — The whole transaction did honor to Fulbert; but Abeillard closes his narration with a shameless reflection: “ He appeared, says he, “ thus solemnly to sign a reconciliation, that he “ might undo me the more easily.”

Seriously resolved to execute his engagement, Abeillard, without delay, set off for Britany. Heloisa was not apprized of his coming: but he found her cheerfully occupied in the duties of her new state. — I am come, said he, (after the first salutations were over, and he had kissed his child, whom Heloisa, with the countenance of an angel, presented to him,) I am come to take you back to Paris, and to marry you. — Heloisa laughed, for she imagined, that he only spoke from gaiety, which was an usual thing with him. — I am serious, continued he: I have seen your uncle; he is reconciled to me, and I have promised to marry you. — If you be serious,

³⁷ Hist. Calam.

replied Heloisa, it becomes me likewise to be so; and I tell you seriously, that I can never consent to be your wife. — The firm tone, in which the last words were spoken, struck Abeillard with surprise. — Your assertion, said he, is peremptory; but I must hear your reasons. — You shall, said she; and then proceeded.

“ If you imagine this step will so far satisfy my uncle, as to appease his anger, Abeillard, you are deceived. I know him well, and he is implacable.—If to save my honor be your object; most evidently you mistake the means. Is it by disgracing you that I must be exalted? What reproaches should I merit from the world, from the church, from the schools of philosophy, were I to draw from them their brightest star: and shall a woman dare to take to herself that man, whom nature meant to be the ornament and the benefactor of the human race? No, Abeillard, I am not yet so shameless. — Then reflect on the state of matrimony itself: with its littleneesses and its cares, how inconsistent is it with the dignity of a wise man! St. Paul earnestly dissuades from it; so do the saints; so do the philosophers of ancient and modern times. Think on their admonitions, and imitate their example. — I will suppose you engaged in this honorable wedlock. What an enviable association; the philosopher and chambermaids, writing desks and cradles, books and distaffs,

BOOK

II.

“pens and spindles! Intent on speculation, when
“the truths of nature and religion are breaking on
“your eye; will you bear the sudden cry of
“children, the lullaby of nurses, or the turbulent
“bustling of disorderly servants? I speak not of
“your delicacy which, at every turn, must be
“disagreeably offended. In the houses of the rich
“these inconveniences, I own, can be avoided:
“with you and me, Abeillard, it must be
“otherwise. — In the serious pursuits of wisdom,
“I am well aware, there is no time to lose;
“worldly occupations are inconsistent with the
“state. Is philosophy only to have your vacant
“hours? Believe me, as well totally withdraw
“from literature, as attempt to proceed in the
“midst of avocations. Science admits no partici-
“pation with the cares of life. View the sages of
“the heathen world, view the philosophizing
“sects among the Jews, and among us view the
“real monks of the present day. It was in retirement,
“in a total seclusion from noisy solitudes, that
“these men pretended to give ear to the inspiring
“voice of wisdom. — May I speak of sobriety
“and continence, Abeillard? But it does not
“become me to instruct you. I know, however,
“how the sages, of whom I speak, did live. —
“You moreover are a churchman, bound to
“severer duties. Is it in wedlock you mean to
“practise them? Will you rise from my side to sing
“the holy praises of the Lord?—The prerogative of

“ the church may perhaps weigh lightly with you ;
 “ support then the character of a philosopher : if
 “ you have no respect for holy things ; let common
 “ decency check the intemperance of your designs.
 “ — Socrates, my Abeillard, was a married man ;
 “ and the example of his life has been set up as a
 “ beacon, to warn his followers from the fatal
 “ rock. The feats of Xantippe are upon faithful
 “ record. The hidden feelings of my soul shall
 “ be open to you. Abeillard, it is in you only
 “ that all my wishes centre. I look for no wealth,
 “ no alliances, no provision. I have no pleasures
 “ to gratify ; no will to serve but your’s. In the
 “ name of wife there may be something more holy,
 “ something more imposing : but I vow to heaven,
 “ should Augustus, master of the world, offer me
 “ his hand in marriage, and secure to me the
 “ uninterrupted control of the universe, I would
 “ deem it more honorable to be called the *mistress*
 “ of Abeillard, than the *wife* of Cæsar ”.

During this address, Abeillard was silent ; but a conflict of passions varying his countenance, marked their strong emotions. Heloisa fixed her eyes on his, and waited his reply. A pause of some moments ensued. — My honor is pledged to your uncle, said he at last, and it must be done. — If it must, replied Heloisa with a sigh that spoke the reluctance of her soul, it must : “ But God grant,
 “ that the consequences of this fatal step be not

³⁹ Ep. Helois. 1^a.

B O O K “ as painful , as the joys , which preceded it , have
 11. “ been great “ ! ”

Uttering these words , her eyes were raised towards heaven ; and from the solemn tone , with which they were delivered , it seemed , says Abeillard , as if her mind presaged some disastrous event.

In this discourse , which I have abridged , (indeed it is abridged in the original itself ,) the reader will discover the strong sense of Heloisa , together with her sensibility and her peculiar turn of character . Unprepared for the topic , she discusses it with infinite art , and is ready with authorities , drawn from sacred and profane history , to enforce her reasoning . — In the excess of her love for Abeillard must be sought for an excuse , if any can be found , to justify some ideas , which , conformably with modern habits , will be deemed licentious . His honor which she saw , would suffer , and his promotion in the church , which matrimony would impede , pressed on her mind with so mighty a weight , that whatever personal considerations could throw into the opposite scale , appeared to her eyes lighter than the lightest feather . — Abeillard , as I have elsewhere noticed , though a canon in the cathedral church of Paris , was not in holy orders , and consequently was yet free to marry ; but , by the discipline of the age , he must then have surrendered his living , and with it all other prospects

of church-preferment. — “ She complains that, in his account of this interview, he had omitted to record the greater part of the motives, by which she was “ induced to prefer love to matrimony, “ and liberty to chains.” She herself, however, fails not to supply the deficiency. The more she sacrificed herself and her reputation, the stronger pretension she should have, she thought, to his regard; and in a voluntary attachment she saw a stronger tie of love, than the nuptial band. — The notions of the age were not, it is well known, so subservient to legal rites, as ours are; indeed, they existed not either so numerous or so obligatory; but I am far from pretending that, at any time perhaps, the romantic spirit of Heloisa could have been confined to what, she esteemed, the vulgar rules of conduct. I hold her not up as an example to call imitation, but I view her as a phenomenon, which has my admiration and my wonder. The comet, which wildly roves through the regions of space, is an object of more eager contemplation, than inferior bodies which, tied in their spheres, never swerve from the fixed line of gravitation.

All things being settled for their departure, and having committed the little boy to the care of his aunt Dionysia, the lovers left Britany. Heloisa had felt the pang of separation, in giving the last kiss to her child; and her prophetic mind viewed,

“ Ep. Hel. 1^a.

B O O K in every step they took, a nearer approach to misery. But she knew when it was her duty to submit; and having once fully expressed her sentiments, she would no more give pain to Abeillard by the continuance of a wayward opposition. — They arrived at Paris, as they had left it, in the silence of the night; for, that the prying eye of curiosity might not watch their actions, it was proper her return should be kept as secret as possible. Heloisa, with a heavy heart, went straight to her uncle's house; he to his own apartments, and the next day, as usual, appeared in the schools⁴².

They are
married.

In the course of a few days, the time was fixed for their marriage. Fulbert, whom experience had rendered suspicious, was not willing to risk any new adventures by unnecessary delays. It was proposed that the ceremony should be performed privately, in a neighbouring church, before break of day. To this the old man assented. A few friends to each party were asked to be present. The morning came, and the fatal knot was tied⁴³. They then separated, each one retiring to his respective home; nor did it seem, that the least suspicion had been raised. Abeillard made no change in his usual form of life; he seldom visited Heloisa, and never but in some disguise, or in the most secret manner.

⁴² Hist. Calam. ⁴³ Ibid.

When the disgrace, which had befallen the canon's family, began publicly to be talked of; and it was known, or at least, conjectured, that a private marriage had taken place: officious friends soon interfered, who represented to the old man that, to retrieve the honor of his niece, and to save that of himself and his house, it was absolutely necessary it should be made public. Fulbert declared the promise he had made to Abeillard. Such a promise, said they, is futile: to make some reparation for the injury he had done her and her family, he marries Heloisa; and this marriage must be kept secret! — Fulbert was roused by the argument; the recollection of past injuries struck forcibly on his heart, and he told his friends, that their advice should be followed. His servants received orders to divulge the marriage: he himself declared it in all companies; and his friends were as industrious to propagate the tale⁴⁴.

The rapid flight of rumor has been celebrated by poets, and facts, to the experience almost of every man, have proved, that there is no exaggeration in their descriptions. The news of the marriage was, in an instant, carried into every house in Paris. Much was said of the good fortune, which attended Heloisa: while some spoke of her high deserts, and others, with a malignant significance, hinted at the circumstance which had

⁴⁴ Hist. Calam.

B O O K procured her the honor of the nuptial wreath". —

II. The fate of the philosopher was not so gently treated: they lamented his loss of honor, and the surrender of dignities and preferment, which must necessarily ensue. When the crozier and glittering mitre courted his acceptance, he had laid his hand on the distaff, they observed.

Heloisa appeared in public: she was noticed with unusual curiosity; her friends crowded round her to compliment her, on her new dignity; and general gratulation sounded in her ears. She was thunderstruck, but not disconcerted. The forebodings of her mind had told her to be prepared for the event. With a composed countenance, therefore, she expressed her utter ignorance of what was meant; laughed at the absurd story, when it was more distinctly repeated to her; and when circumstances were urged to give it additional force, with the most solemn asseverations she declared, that it was an impudent falsehood". — The reader who has considered the unexampled sensibility, which Heloisa has manifested for the honor of her husband, will not be surprised at this new trait of her disinterested magnanimity. In the school of morality a severer judgment will be passed.

The firm but naïf manner, in which Heloisa denied her marriage, convinced many that Fulbert, from views known to himself, had imposed a false

report on the public. There could be no motive, they thought, to induce his niece to deny a fact, which if true, would bring honor and happiness with it. — Besides, when they reflected, how brilliant was the prospect which lay open to Abeillard, of rising to the first dignities in the church, it did not seem probable, he would make a sacrifice of the whole to the charms of Heloisa. When the beauties of Paris laid their garlands at his feet, would he take up the chains of wedlock, exposing himself to the ridicule of the world, and to the anxious cares of life? — Abeillard, by his behaviour, still convinced them more, that he was not a married man. He had resumed, with fresh ardor, his wonted course of studies; he delivered his lectures with uncommon perspicuity and powers; he opened new and unexplored questions for further discussion; and his hearers, as they were more than ever captivated by his eloquence, rejoiced in the return of his former vigor, and that philosophy had at last triumphed over the allurements of a woman ⁴⁷.

Fulbert, perceiving that his endeavours to divulge the marriage, were so artfully counteracted by his niece, as to be almost wholly frustrated, was extremely irritated. He charged her with ingratitude, with insensibility to her own honor and to that of her family, and with a depravity of humor, which, in spite of the strongest motives,

⁴⁷ Vie d'Abeil.

BOOK induced her to prefer falshood to truth. —

II. Heloisa justified her conduct with great firmness; she reminded her uncle of the solemn promise he had made to Abeillard not to publish the marriage; and she urged, with the most emphatic eloquence, the reputation of her husband, as a motive which, in her mind, must outweigh every other consideration. “ Accuse me not, said she, “ of ingratitude: I feel all the duties which bind “ me to you; but Abeillard is my husband.” — The argument was not of a nature to impress the callous heart of age; the honor of family was uppermost, and the wound he had received was not yet healed “.

Heloisa was silent: why remonstrate with a man, it was not possible to convince? But her life became daily more irksome. Fulbert persisted to reproach her, and to reproaches added ill-usage. All this she bore with a becoming resolution: but suspecting this persecution might at last end in what she dreaded most, the positive exclusion of Abeillard from her company, she acquainted him of her situation, and of the fears which came nearest to her heart. Instantly he resolved to remove her from her uncle’s house “.

He conveys
her to Argen-
teuil.

Argenteuil, situated in the neighbourhood of Paris, was then an abbey of Benedictine nuns. Here Heloisa had been educated, and here she had imbibed all those elements of learning; which,

“ Hist. Calam. “ Ibid.

at

at this time, made her the first literary character in the female world. Abeillard judged properly, that this would be the best retirement for his wife: it would rescue her from the hands of Fulbert; it would afford her a pleasing society; and it might, possibly, more than any thing contribute to silence the report of their marriage. — He informed the abbess of his intention, and requested she would have a nun's habit in readiness, as it was his wish, that Heloisa should appear in the common dress of the convent. Without difficulty his petition was granted: the holy sisterhood would be charmed, once more to see within the walls of Argenteuil, the lovely pensioner, who had done so much honor to their house: her engaging manners were yet warm on their recollection. — Abeillard therefore, again protected by the shades of night, removed his dear treasure, and consigned it safely to the cloister of Argenteuil^o.

Some weeks, it appears, had elapsed, before Fulbert could discover how his niece had been disposed of. Information, at last, was brought him, where she was; that she had been conveyed away by Abeillard; and that, by his command, she had put on the habit of a nun. Appearances were strong, and on them the old man rested his conjectures. — Was a convent, thought he, the only place to which he could have taken his wife,

^o Hist. Calam.

BOOK II. had he been determined to remove her? or if a convent pleased him best, why was the dress also of a nun to be chosen? She might have remained there in the common habit of the world. — The suggestions of his friends served to corroborate his suspicions. They were unanimously of opinion that, Abeillard, finding it impossible to keep his marriage secret, had resolved at once to rid himself of the incumbrance, and that his design was to devote to God what he could not retain, consistently with his reputation and future prospects. To attempt forcibly to drag Heloisa from the cloister, would be, they knew, an act of sacrilege; the laws, they knew, would give them no redress; other means of vengeance were therefore to be projected.

Abeillard, though conscious of the uprightness of his designs, viewed, with pain, the maze of difficulties, in which he was involved: often did he wish that he had followed the advice of Heloisa; but now it was too late. With a trembling eye he looked forward to futurity, but there no gleam was discoverable, which might seem to portend a fortunate issue to his troubles. — Sometimes he visited Heloisa at her convent, but always in the greatest privacy⁵¹. — I will not pretend that he never indulged the thought that, tired perhaps by anxiety, to which there was no end, or from the love she bore him, Heloisa might propose, as the only way to end all troubles, to consecrate herself

⁵¹ Ep. Abeil. 3^a.

to religion. — He would never compel her to so severe a choice; but should she herself first suggest it, it would not become him to oppose her holy purpose. Liberty and independence would be again in his possession; and he might reach from fortune's wheel to the proudest objects of his ambition. The sight of his fair nun would, I know, dispel this airy castle; but when the gay hour was over, and reflection returned, his imagination would rebuild it perhaps in gaudier colors.

BOOK
II.

Fulbert, in the mean while, often met his friends. His cheek was wan with anger, and a sullen melancholy sat upon his brow. Various schemes of vengeance were proposed: some they rejected as impracticable, some as too dangerous, and others as inadequate to the insulting crime of their enemy. It was at last hinted, that there was a punishment, which would fully satisfy every desire that revenge itself could harbour; which would carry pain and infamy along with it; which would make the sufferer an object of general ridicule; and which would most effectually check his career towards further dignities and church-preferments. The idea was instantly adopted.

Fulbert's re-
venge.

But even this project, when coolly considered, might be attended with some danger, and with many difficulties. Abeillard had innumerable friends, and his house was ever under the guard of servants. The conspirators however were not of

BOOK a humor to be intimidated from their purpose by
II. any ordinary concurrence of obstacles. It was agreed that an attempt should be made to corrupt one of his servants: this effected, what else could frustrate their scheme? The servant, by a sum of money, was easily seduced, and the plan of operation was determined ⁵².

In the silence of the next night the conspirators assemble; they are five in number; they proceed to the house of Abeillard; the door is opened by the servant; he conducts them to the apartment of his master; Abeillard is in a profound sleep; they seize the unfortunate man; all resistance is vain — and the horrid deed is perpetrated ⁵¹.

While the business, I have described, engaged all the attention of the Parisians, nothing very interesting occurred in the affairs of Europe. To the tumultuary scenes which closed the century, had succeeded a solemn pause. It was an effect in the common order of things. The crusaders were returned; and the story of their adventures would supply ample matter for general entertainment. They themselves would be disposed to rest from their labors, to enjoy the admiration of their fellow-citizens, and having expiated their former crimes, open a new career of extravagance and vice. But the calm, as the minds of men were then circumstanced, could not long continue.

Pascal the second was pope of Rome. He was

Pascal II.
 pope of
 Rome.

⁵² Hist. Calam. ⁵¹ Ibid.

a man of virtue and abilities, and Gregory the seventh had been his friend. The grand scheme of ecclesiastical monarchy, which Gregory and his immediate successor Urban had formed, and begun to realize, was pursued by Pascal. With their schemes, he also engaged in their quarrels. Henry, the German emperor, whom the thunders of the vatican had not subdued, was still living, nor was he disposed to recede from his pretensions. Again he was excommunicated, again the princes of Christendom were called upon to crush the proud enemy of the church, and his son Henry was instigated to lay his hand on his father's crown. The blow proved fatal. Unable to oppose the powerful confederacy Henry resigned the empire to his son: he was then thrown into prison, but escaping, he assembled a small army, which was defeated. The old man was reduced to extreme distress; without a friend, he wandered from place to place, and fearing to perish by hunger, he entreated the bishop of Spire to grant him a lay-prebend in his church. "I have studied, said he, and have learned to sing, and therefore may be of some service to you." His request was denied. He did not long survive this event. For fifty years his head had worn the diadem*.

Though his successor Henry the fifth owed his crown, in a great measure, to the intrigues of

* Fleury, vol. xiv. Nat. Alex. sæc. xii.

BOOK II. Rome; yet was he not for this more subservient to her mandates. He supported the same quarrel about the right of investitures, made Pascal prisoner, and extorted from him a concession of the great point, which had been so long in litigation. The pusillanimous conduct of the pontiff raised a general murmur: he called a council at Rome, to justify his proceedings, and to exculpate himself from the crime of heresy, with which his adversaries had charged him. But the council proceeded to censure what he had done, and they solemnly annulled the writing, whereby he had granted the right of investiture to Henry. Pascal confessed his fault; though what he had done, he said, was done by compulsion, to rescue himself and his people from the ruin which threatened them. He then submitted himself to the arbitration of the synod, offering to resign the tiara, which he was no longer worthy to wear. His demission was not accepted⁵⁵.

An *investiture*, concerning which so much is said in the histories of these times, is a solemn act, by which the possession of lands and honors, belonging to episcopal sees, was conferred on the persons, who were canonically chosen to fill them. Temporal sovereigns pretended to the right of investiture. It was from them that the church derived her riches, and among her extensive possessions were many feudatory tenures, which

⁵⁵ Fleury, vol. xiv. Nat. Alex. sæc. xii.

naturally remained liable to the common conditions of fiefs. These were called *regalia*. It was asserted that, agreeably to general maxims, no one should enter on the possession of such lands or honors, without the consent of the prince. — After due homage had been made, and an oath of allegiance taken, he granted this possession by putting an instrument, such as the pastoral staff, or the sceptre, into the hand of the candidate. In all this there seemed to be no infringement of ecclesiastical privileges, as it was not pretended that the prince could grant spiritual or canonical jurisdiction. This was left to the church. However, as the crozier and ring, which the prince used, on these occasions, were thought to signify ecclesiastical power, it was maintained that the ceremony was an usurpation of sacred things, which belonged not to him⁵⁶.—It must, indeed, be owned, that great abuses were the consequence of these lay-investitures. Princes interfered in the elections of bishops, so far as to destroy their freedom; they kept the sees vacant, under pretence, that persons were chosen, who were not agreeable to them; they appointed their favorites, men too often unworthy of the important charge, to fill them, and sometimes, by a simoniacal disposal, they gave them to those who offered most. Against this undue stretch of power, the worthy pastors of the church opposed all their zeal; and

⁵⁶ Nat. Alex. *ibid*.

BOOK

II.

had this solely been the contest between them and princes, the approbation of all thinking christians would have gone with the former.

Unfortunately both parties were jealous of each other, and this jealousy blinded their judgments. They would not distinguish between things that, in themselves, were totally disparate. The temporal power apprehended, that it was the wish of the churchmen absolutely to withdraw themselves and their possessions from all earthly control: for which apprehension, clearly, there were too strong grounds: while, on their side, the church-rulers were not less fearful, that the prince aimed to arrogate the whole of their concerns to himself, to enslave their ministers, to usurp their possessions, and to control their elections. Nor was this dread less founded than the other.

In no part of Christendom, was this controversy agitated with greater heat, than in England. It was the dispute, which so long divided Henry the first and his archbishop Anselm. This worthy and learned prelate had adopted the new doctrines of the times, in which he was strenuously supported by Pascal. Henry pretended to the use of no power that had not been exercised by all his predecessors⁵⁷: but this power had been abused. The court of Rome not satisfied with attacking the abuse, aimed at the subversion of the principle. They would not allow that the investiture of church-

⁵⁷ Nat. Alex. *ibid.*

honors should be given by a lay-hand whatever declarations might be made, that nothing spiritual was intended. BOOK II.

When the characters of these three great men, Henry, Pascal, and Anselm, are considered, it is matter of surprise that their differences could ever be terminated. The inflexibility of Henry was remarkable, and he had with him the general suffrages of his nobles and bishops: besides, the rights he supported, were the ancient rights of his crown. Pascal and Anselm were not made of softer materials, and it seemed to them, they were defending the sacred and unalienable privileges of God and his church. — On both sides, I discover the most upright motives, grounded on principles of equity and conscience. — Pascal at length gave way; though concessions were also made by the adverse party. It was agreed, that the king, in future, should grant investitures, but without delivering the ring or crozier; for on these implements, in fact, hinged the grand difficulty. Pascal, in a letter to the archbishop, thus expresses himself. “ It is true, “ I am disposed to make concessions to the king, “ that he may know the sincerity of my heart. If “ you see your neighbour fallen to the ground, “ can it be said you are in earnest to relieve him, “ unless while you stretch out your hand, you “ also bend your body towards him? To give “ effectual assistance we must stoop; nor is the

B O O K "attitude disgraceful". They are the sentiments
 II. of a great mind.

Thus was the power of the church every day growing to an immense magnitude: it was the soul which gave animation to the political designs of Europe. — From this period we may trace its progress, its alternate ebbs and flows, as circumstances directed. When it fell into the hands of able and enterprising men, no force was strong enough to resist it; because, on these occasions, besides its own weight, it had the support of those princes, whose interest it was to give it efficacy. In the hands of weak or ignorant rulers, its influence fell, in a similar proportion. — Much evil, I am ready to allow, often proceeded from this great stretch of power; but also, very often, did it produce great good. Could they both be weighed in an equal balance, I fear not to declare, that the good would often preponderate. The popes, I know, were often men of ambition, and in their designs often not actuated by the true principles of religion; but also, far the greatest part of them were conspicuous for their abilities and high moral virtues: they were the first men of the age. In such hands place an unlimited power, and the consequences must prove favorable to the general interests of human kind. Every motive, which has influence on man, was in play to urge them to virtuous and laudable

" Nat. Alex. *ibid.* Fleury, vol. xiv.

undertakings. Even their own honor was concerned: for a profligate pontiff was in no estimation: and wherein could their ambition feel a greater indulgence, than in schemes which tended to the suppression of vice and the spread of virtue? Here also success contributed to strengthen the power which produced it. In the twelfth century, take from Rome the vast influence of the tiara, and the condition of Europe, I think, will appear to be greatly more deplorable than it was. It was the great engine which, in the ordinary course of providence, was deemed necessary to conduct the business of the christian world. As circumstances altered, it ceased to be so, and it gradually dwindled down to what, at this day, it is. In some future revolution of things, Rome may again rise to its former altitude, and be once more the controuling power of Europe.

BOOK
II.

In France, Philip the first was dead, and his son, Lewis the sixth, had succeeded to the throne. Scenes of internal war and discord still continued. Circumscribed, indeed, as the royal domain then was, they were unavoidable. The proud vassals, some of them able to bring more men into the field, than their prince, little regarded his authority, when their testy humor was irritated. But after the conquest of England by a Norman prince, the French king was every day exposed to more serious attacks. The Duke of Normandy was his vassal, but also he was king of

France and
England.

B O O K

II.

England, and as such independent on him. Mutual jealousy and reasons of state could not long want subjects of contention; besides, the discontented men of both kingdoms were ever prepared to uncover the embers, and to blow the smallest spark into a flame".

The vanity of an Englishman might be flattered in the possession of a territory, which led him almost to the gates of Paris; but when the evils are viewed, which, from this circumstance, so long desolated both countries, surely it must be deemed a happy event, that we no longer possess a single acre of land upon that hostile shore.

I mentioned the dispute about investitures, which was a very principal concern, at this time, in the affairs of England. What else engaged the monarch's attention was, the strengthening of his kingdom at home, and the establishment of his power in Normandy. As Robert, his elder brother, the hero who had done wonders before the walls of Jerusalem, was rightful heir to both countries, it required no small address to retain the possession of his usurped dominions. Robert, besides, was the courtier's, the soldier's, and the churchman's friend. But the good fortune of the English monarch prevailed; for Henry was the wisest man, as stout a warrior, and the greatest politician of the age, in which he lived. — The melancholy

" Hume, Daniel.

story of the lives of Robert and his son William, to which may be added that of Edgar Atheling, the friend of Robert and his partner in affliction, is well known to the English reader.

B O O K

II.

In looking round for other objects of selection, I find little else in the political state of Europe. But the church is ever a fertile repository: here the historian, whatever be his character, philosophical or religious, can never want materials.

Enthusiasm, as the reader has already seen, was a great feature in the character of the times; for mankind was then ignorant and unoccupied. In this state the mind falls back on itself, and finding nothing there which may engage its attention, it becomes always uneasy, and sometimes even weary of existence. External impressions are then most forcible, because the thoughts are unengaged; and they are most pleasing, because they dissipate the torpid apathy, from which proceeds the misery just mentioned. But only strong impressions can generate this effect. Human nature, in a state of incultivation, knows nothing of the finer feelings; the fibres, on the motion of which these depend, have never learned to play. Thus, in savage life, only war and the dangerous sports of the field are pursued with ardor. — The observation applies to the twelfth century. The trumpet sounded to arms, and we saw whole provinces at once in motion; at other times,

Religious orders.

BOOK II. quarrels, invasions, skirmishes at home, could afford them an agreeable relaxation.

But as, in different men, different are the characters, owing to difference of organization, or climate, or education, so would not all be equally affected by the same agent. The voice or example of a man, deemed to be inspired from heaven; or the awful denunciations of God against sinners; or the horror itself, which certain minds, cast in a better mould, are apt to feel at the view of enormous crimes: these impressions, respectively, would produce their effects; and it appears that multitudes, at this time, were disposed to receive them. Whenever it happened, a proportionate enthusiasm would be raised on the mind; and this it was that, in a philosophical light at least, called so many into the cloisters, which were now opened in various parts of the Western world.

It is falsely imagined, that the monastic life was then a state of indolence or inaction, and consequently not calculated to generate the pleasing sensations, I described. In itself, abstractedly considered, it was not full of energy; but I have observed, that it often opened the paths to honor and preferment. Ambition would then be roused, and look ardently towards the object of its wishes; whilst the milder emotions, which religion and the exercise of the severer virtues, would excite in others, could not fail to produce the happiest

effects. — The founders of these religious institutes, BOOK
 if we view them with a candid eye, will be found II.
 to have been men of exalted virtue: they seemed
 to be a new class of mortals, and to breathe from
 inspiration; and it was thought, sometimes,
 perhaps, from an irritated imagination which
 blinded the judgment, or from ignorance of the
 powers of nature, or really because heaven, in
 compassion to a wicked generation, judged it
 expedient to speak to them in wonders; that they
 possessed the marvellous gift of working miracles.
 It may easily be conjectured, how powerful
 would be the effect of such considerations. Who
 would not wish to be the disciples of these favored
 sons of heaven? By some it would be expected
 that a portion, perhaps, of the same spirit would
 descend upon them also, that they should be
 great, admired by men, and beloved of God;
 while others, more rationally disposed, in a
 nearer approach to their persons, would admire
 their virtues, and strive to imitate their example.

The monastic or eremitical life was of very
 ancient date. It did not seem to men, endowed
 with warm imaginations, that our Saviour and his
 disciples had sufficiently departed from the common
 maxims and ways of society. So at least, in these
 degenerate days, we are sometimes disposed to
 think of them. They fancied there were paths,
 which would lead them nearer to the high perfection
 of angels; and these paths they resolved to tread.

B O O K This it was that, in the first ages, filled the deserts of the East. No one would contest their habitations with them; and they earned their bread in the sweat of their brows, accompanying their labors with continual prayer. The designs of such men must have been meritorious, and in their lives there was perfection; but they must not be judged by any common rule. Man is a social being, and there are duties, by which, in the ordinary course of providence, we seem to be bound to one another. The fact appears almost incredible; but we are told that, at the end of the fourth century, the deserts alone of Egypt contained nearly eighty thousand hermits[“]. The motives which led them thither were, I am ready to believe, founded on misconceptions of duty; but the indulgence of passion could possibly have had no influence. When we seek gratification, it will hardly be among burning sands and the howlings of wild beasts.

This extraordinary love of solitude gradually spread from the East into the Western continent. But as all passions partake, more or less, of the nature of the soil or climate, where they arise, or into which they are transplanted, the European constitution was found inadequate to the lofty flights of the Egyptian and Asiatic hermits. — In 530 St. Bennet instituted his order in Italy, the primitive forms of which have no pretensions to the austere

[“] Fleury, disc. 8.

discipline, that distinguished the monks, I have mentioned. In the lapse, however, of a few centuries, even the disciples of Bennet fell from the perfection of their institute. Such is the nature of all human establishments: and towards the beginning of the tenth century, by the incursions of barbarous nations and the general hostilities of the times, which ruined monasteries and overturned churches, the monastic rule was nearly extinguished in the Western church *.

B O O K
II.

Now it was, that the famous institute of Clugny, in France, rose from the ashes of the Benedictin rule. A succession of abbots, famed for sanctity and science, gave celebrity to the new observance. Its houses multiplied over the continent of Europe: men of the highest rank and of the most brilliant talents, were proud to be seen in the dress of Clugny; and it became the great seminary, from which Rome drew its most eminent pontiffs, and the church its worthiest ministers. But even the monks of Clugny were men: riches flowed into their monasteries, and the evils, consequent on riches, came along with them. In two hundred years from its foundation, Clugny sank into obscurity. Peter the venerable, who died in 1156, was the last abbot, whom history records with praises.

* Fleury, disc. 8.

BOOK

II.

The Char-
treuse.

At this time also, St. Bruno instituted his Carthusians. He was a man of letters, and of great repute in the churches of France. Disgusted of the world, and naturally of a gloomy disposition, he associated to himself a few companions, and with these retired to the dreadful solitudes in the neighbourhood of Grenoble. The man who has seen this sequestered region, even in its more hospitable state, may form some conception of the mind of Bruno. The horrors of the place were congenial with his soul: here, he thought, the divinity loved to dwell, and that, in the howlings of the wilderness, he should more distinctly hear his voice. To the austerities, with which nature clothed every object round him, he added whatever imagination could suggest, painful, macerating, and oppressive, in silence, abstemiousness, and penury. The inhabitants of the Chartreuse, so was their dwelling called, forbade themselves the poor comforts of their own society; and the few wanderers, whom curiosity might lead to them, were refused admission to their huts. Women were not allowed to put a foot upon the ground, which the pious solitaries called their enclosure; and Hugo, bishop of Grenoble, to whom the wilderness belonged, forbade the fisherman to approach their brooks, and the huntsman to disturb their silence with his horn: the animals of the forest might not browse on their herbage. Every cheering object

was to be removed from this scene of prayer and penitence⁶². — Bruno died in 1101.

BOOK

II.

Though this imperfect sketch of the Carthusian institute may not seem inviting, yet so strong is the sympathy between certain minds and every thing which should seem horrible in nature and religion, that, in a short time, not only the Chartreuse was crowded with inhabitants, but even the order quickly branched out into all the kingdoms of Europe. The situations of their convents could not resemble the Grenoble wilderness, but the discipline and internal economy were every where alike. For seven hundred years has this order now continued, and what is extraordinary, it has departed less from its primitive austerity, than any other monastic institute in the christian church.

It is not the philosopher or the politician, who will be called upon to give his sanction to such extraordinary establishments: but to the infinite variety of character, which marks the human race, it seems, all possible modes of life should be permitted, whereby content and happiness can be procured. Man is a free agent, and may chuse for himself: there is tyranny in the contrary doctrine.

At this period, while Bruno and his disciples, Fontevraud, in the horrid retirement of Dauphiné declared

⁶² Fleury, vol. xiii.

BOOK II. war against themselves and the allurements of the world, Robert d'Arbrisselles, in the milder climate of Touraine, supported the same conflict, but in circumstances still more extraordinary. He also was a man of letters, and had rendered himself serviceable in the church. He prayed much, fasted much, watched much, and over his skin he wore a coat of mail. His zeal against the fashionable vices of the age was flagrant, simony, ecclesiastical concubinage, and every species of oppression on the poor and on the church. Robert had enemies; he therefore quitted the world, and withdrew to the woods.

Pope Urban being at Angers, the capital of Anjou, in 1096, was told of the pious solitary, and of his abilities: he wished to hear him preach. Robert attended, and acquitted himself so well before a numerous assembly of people, that the pontiff, on the spot, granted him an unlimited commission to preach, wheresoever fancy might lead him. Arbrisselles's fancy was not easily confined: he ranged into the neighbouring provinces; multitudes crowded to hear him, and his success was wonderful. For ten years he led this unsettled life.

Robert was, at last, made sensible, that great abuses were the consequence of this promiscuous assemblage of men and women. Having no fixed habitation, they wandered with their master, and where night found them, there they reposed.

Robert was of a more social turn than the holy B O O K
solitary of Grenoble: he held out his hand to the II.
most profligate sinners, and women, of all descriptions, were sure to find an asylum near him. His friends expostulated very severely with him; they charged him with too easy a familiarity; they condemned his unsettled way of life; and they ridiculed his long beard, his naked feet, and his grotesque apparel. Robert looked round for an habitation, and he found one.

It was a wilderness, called Fontevraud, on the confines of Poitou. Inhabited by wild beasts, and in that state of incultivation, which nature, in her luxuriant fancies, loves to form, it was of no value to its proprietors. They gave it to Robert; and here he settled his numerous family. To protect themselves from the inclemencies of the air, they built huts. Robert then separated the men from the women. To the men he prescribed hard labor, and, at stated times, called them to sing psalms or to pray: the women he confined to their cabins, and he turned the key upon them. For some time, they lived in great indigence, supported only by the wild roots of the wilderness, and the water of the brook, or by the uncertain contributions of the neighbourhood. The prospect soon cleared: very considerable donations in land were made to them; and the desert of Fontevraud began to smile.

BOOK

II.

In 1116, ten years after its foundation, Fontevraud was in a flourishing state. Kings and the nobles of the land had heaped their riches round it. The number of religious of both sexes, exceeded three thousand.—It was a whimsical idea of their founder to subject the men to the women. He had read in the gospels, that John, the beloved disciple of his master, had been ordered by him to adopt the virgin Mary for his mother. This was an example to be followed: the holy women of Fontevraud were to have the privilege of mothers; and it should be the duty of their sons to serve them, and to obey them. Robert drawing near to his end, assembled the male part of his community, and said: “My children, is it your intention to persevere in the holy resolution you have made, and to obey the handmaids of our Lord, whom I have ordained to govern all the houses of my order?” They answered, unanimously, that such was their intention. He then chose for their superior, Petronilla de Craon, a noble widow, and soon after expired.”

” Fleury, vol. xiv. Nat. Alex. sæc. xii.

END OF THE SECOND BOOK.

THE
HISTORY
OF THE LIVES OF
ABEILLARD and HELOISA.

BOOK III.

*Distress of Abeillard — Heloisa hears the news —
Hard fate of Fulbert — Abeillard proposes to
Heloisa to quit the world — She is professed a nun —
Abeillard becomes a monk at St. Denys — He re-
sumes his lectures — Is cited before the council of
Soissons — Is confined at St. Medard — Returns to
St. Denys — Escapes in the night. — Reflections.*

Anno, 1119.

UNCHEERING was the fun which rose to BOOK
III.
Abeillard. — His servants; wakened by the noise,
and the cries of their master, had run in to his
assistance, and procured him the help his melan-
choly situation called for. The neighbourhood
was alarmed; but the assassins had escaped. He
desired to be left alone.

B O O K

III.

Distress of
Abeillard.

Now it was, that a thousand distressing thoughts rushed into his mind. — He that had been the idol of admiration, was become an object of scorn and ridicule! — He should be pointed at in the streets; every tongue, and the eye of every beholder, would say; there goes Abeillard! — How would his enemies exult in his fall; and even from his friends, he could only look for pity! Was pity at last the enviable reward, that was to crown all his glory! — There was an end of literary fame; an end of philosophy; an end of every pursuit which was dear to his ambition. — Should he again dare to enter the schools — but the jeering looks of the young men would be an eternal bar to the attempt. — Yet how much, thought he, had he merited this humiliation: and how equitable were the judgments of heaven! He had basely betrayed the man, who had confided in him; and now treachery was returned for treachery¹. — He paused; but no thought would arise, from which to draw the smallest gleam of comfort: nor does he say, in this tumultuary crowd of reflections, that his mind even once turned from itself to Heloise.

The mournful soliloquy, however, was soon broken. Rumor had carried the tale from door to door; and it was hardly day, when his friends, anxious to know the truth, and to express their condolence, crowded to his house. “The whole city, says he,

¹ Hist. Calam.

“ assembled round me : astonishment was marked
 “ on their countenances ; tears fell from their
 “ eyes. But can I express, how much their lamen-
 “ tations irritated and disturbed me? The church-
 “ men chiefly, and more than these my scholars,
 “ pained me with their sighs and wailings. It was
 “ their compassion which afflicted me, and not
 “ the smart of my wounds. I hung my head,
 “ and blushed. I had read in the book of Num-
 “ bers, that such animals as myself were not to be
 “ received, even as victims, in the sacrifices of
 “ the Lord ².”

Vanity may be thought to have suggested the first part of this narration ; but the story is told in terms equally pompous by a contemporary author ³. In a letter of consolation to Abeillard, he says: “ You were retired to rest, and meant evil
 “ to no man ; when the hand of villany, armed
 “ with a murdering knife, prepared to spill your
 “ blood. The venerable metropolitan of Paris
 “ bewailed the fatal stroke ; the college of prebends
 “ and of illustrious churchmen bewailed it ; the
 “ city, deeming herself disgraced by the atrocious
 “ deed, joined in the doleful lamentation — So
 “ great, indeed, was the general grief, that you
 “ might be pleased rather with the cause which
 “ produced it. It is not in prosperity that we
 “ know our friends. Paris, which lamented your

² Hist. Calam. ³ Fulco, ep. ad Abeil.

BOOK " misfortune, has now told you, how much she
 III. " loves her Abeillard. "

Heloisa hears
 the news.

Heloisa, in the mean while, was at Argenteuil. In the society of her dear nuns, in literary pursuits, and in holy meditation, the hours flowed gently on. Abeillard did not often visit her; but lest fresh suspicions should be raised, she had herself advised the most circumspect caution. When he was with her, she enjoyed his company without danger of intrusion. Compared, therefore, with what she had suffered under her uncle's roof, the cloister of Argenteuil had a thousand pleasures. Imagination also helped to gild the scene: they looked forward to the day, when, possibly, some event, in the general revolution of things, might be propitious, and make their union happy. — Such was the situation of Heloisa.

But Abeillard, for some days, had not appeared; the time he had promised to return was passed; a vague rumor of something disastrous began to spread; and it was whispered that Abeillard had been attacked by ruffians. Nothing is so easily moved as the minds of lovers. Heloisa started at the sound; the forebodings, which troubled her, had not subsided: she knew the revengeful spirit of her uncle, and that he had been grievously irritated; and she knew the temper of the men, in whom he confided most. The report gradually gained strength; and Heloisa soon

understood the extent of her misfortune⁴. — It might, at first, be indistinctly conveyed, but the delicacy of the age would be no bar to the most circumstantial detail of the tragical event. — Now it was necessary she should exert her heroism; should draw consolation from religion and philosophy; and should appear as great in affliction, as she had in love. — The selfish Abeillard is again silent on the subject, and no history is extant to record the behaviour of Heloisa on this sad occasion.

The russians, I have said, had escaped; but diligent search was made by the magistrates, and two of them were taken. One of these was the servant, who had betrayed his master. The punishment inflicted on them was agreeable to the notions of the age; they lost their eyes, and the *lex talionis*, (a law founded on the strictest principle of justice, and which might, with the greatest propriety, be revived in all countries,) completed the work⁵.

Nor were the bishop and his clergy less active in prosecuting Fulbert. He, as well as Abeillard, were members of the ecclesiastical body, and consequently, the cognizance of their cause appertained to them. Such was then the established discipline.—The unhappy Fulbert appeared before

BOOK

III.

Hard fate of
Fulbert.

⁴ Vie d'Abeil. p. 96.

⁵ Hist. Ca'am.

BOOK his judges : the crime, of which he was accused, III. seemed notorious; but, as he was not present at its perpetration, he was permitted to make his defence. What his defence was, is not related; only it is said, that he denied himself to be guilty. The circumstance of his absence, and the cruel provocation he had received, were maturely weighed; the milder spirit of the ecclesiastical court was permitted to operate; and a sentence was pronounced, severe indeed, but not bloody as that which fell on his accomplices. He was deprived of his benefice, and his goods were confiscated⁶.

We hear no more of this unhappy man, whose fate was peculiarly hard. Deceived by him, on whose integrity, he presumed, he might rely; and deserted by a niece, in whose happiness all his affections centered, is it surprising, he should fly to vengeance for redress? — Abeillard, with a selfish indignation, which a great soul could not have harboured, arraigned, as too indulgent, the sentence of Fulbert's judges, and called the bishop and his clergy, the accomplices of his guilt⁷. — Even Heloisa seemed to have no feeling left for the poor old man. In her letters she mentions his name with horror, and sees no alleviation to his guilt. When time and religion had worn off the edge of passion;

⁶ Fulco, ut supra.

⁷ Ibid.

possibly she would view his conduct with a more indulgent eye: his name, at least, is registered in the mortuary calendar of the Paraclet. There is a time, it seems, when the most resentful minds forgive.

Abeillard was unable to withstand the humiliating reflections, which pressed on his mind. The philosophy, he had studied, was not of a nature to speak comfort to him; of religion he knew little more than its splendid theory; and his great talents, the display of which had given exaltation to his name, being once brought low, would only serve to add weight to his depression. His friends in vain consoled him: their pity could but hurt his pride; and their advice, he knew, was unsupported by truth and the opinions of the world. Like Prometheus, he felt the vulture at his breast. In this state of mind, he says, it was, that he looked to the cloister, as the only place, which, at once, could bury his shame, and hide him from the observation of mortals*. — He communicated his design to Heloïsa, and proposed that she should imitate his example.

Heloïsa had not reached her twentieth year. In the vigor of youth and the prime of beauty, could it be supposed, that she also must see charms in a cell, or that she would be inclined to turn her back on a world, with which she had

BOOK
III.

Abeillard
proposes to
Heloïsa to
quit the
world.

* Hist. Calam.

BOOK

III.

hardly made acquaintance, and which, notwithstanding, had expressed a strong partiality for her character, and an admiration of her talents. But the selfish eunuch knew the excess of her love for him, and of this he would avail himself: could she be his companion no longer, the remainder of her days should be devoted to solitude, and the pure colloquy of angels. — It is not said, how Heloisa received this ungenerous proposal; but, as we know from her own letters, that the natural dispositions of her mind were averse from the cloister; it is probable she would expostulate with Abeillard: she would assure him of her unalterable regard; that it should never be in the power of man to divide her heart; that the world should ever-more be hateful to her; but that, as she felt no inclination to the veil, she hoped, she might be permitted to spend her life, a voluntary recluse, without the tie of eternal vows, within the walls of Argenteuil.

The proud man was irritated by this gentle expostulation, and he ordered her instantly to comply. Heloisa assented. “It was not religion,” says she, which called me to the cloisters: “I was then in the bloom of youth; but you ordered, and I obeyed.” — The sacrifice was not yet complete. She had, indeed, promised to comply with his injunctions; but was he sure,

^{*} Hist. Calam. Ep. Heloisa. 1^a.

should he first engage himself, and leave her at liberty, that she might not violate her promise, and return to the world. He was therefore cruel enough to signify his suspicions, and to insist, that she bound herself first. "When you had resolved to quit the world, she says to him, "I followed you; rather I ran before you. It seems, you had the image of the patriarch's wife before your eyes: You feared I might look back; and therefore before you could surrender your own liberty, I was to be devoted. In that one instance, I confess, your mistrust of me tore my heart: Abeillard, I blushed for you. Heaven knows, had I seen you hastening to perdition, at a single word, I should not have hesitated to have followed, or to have preceded you. My soul was no longer in my own possession¹⁰."

BOOK
III.

Having submitted also to this harsh demand, and choosing the abbey of Argenteuil for her long residence, a day was fixed for the solemn ceremony of her profession.

She is professed a nun.

It was, by this time, no longer a secret, that Abeillard and Heloisa had been married: the story of their adventures was generally known; it was known what had instigated Fulbert to his savage revenge; and it was now known, that the lovers were retiring from the world, and that the places of their abode were chosen.

¹⁰ Ep. Hel. 1^a.

BOOK The day came. Curiosity had drawn crowds
 III. to Argenteuil. The bishop of Paris officiated in the ceremony; and having blessed the holy veil, which was to cover the head of the victim, he laid it on the altar. The assembly stood in silent expectation: the gates of the cloister opened, and Heloisa came forward. — She was clothed in the becoming dress of the order; her attitude marked resignation to her fate; and the hand of affliction had given to her features an angelic softness. — As by a mechanical impulse every bosom thrilled with compassion: it had been whispered that her sacrifice was involuntary: numbers pressed round her; and her approach to the altar was impeded". — They begged her not to proceed; they urged the fatality of the step; they accused her pretended friends of cruelty; they spoke of her beauty, of her charms, of her talents, and of the horrors of a cloister. — Heloisa was visibly affected; but not by their expostulations: the fate of Abeillard alone, who was soon to tread the same mournful path, hung heavy on her heart: tears rolled down her cheeks; and, in broken accents, she was heard to pronounce the words of Cornelia:

O maxime conjux,
 O thalamis indigne meis, Hoc juris habebit
 In tantum fortuna caput! Cur impia nupsi,
 Si miserum factura fui? Nunc accipe pœnas,
 Sed quas sponte luam. LUCAN. Phar. l. 8.

" Hist. Calam.

Uttering

Uttering the last words, as she strove to advance, the crowd separated : her resolution rose fuller on her countenance: she mounted the steps of the altar: put her hand on the veil, with which she covered her face: and pronounced distinctly the fatal vows, which were to sever her from the world and Abeillard for ever¹¹.

The heroism of this action has seldom, I believe, been equalled. But love and the peculiar strength of her mind, would have carried Heloisa even to more arduous sacrifices, had they been presented to her. — It will be said, that her mind, at the awful moment of giving herself to God, was not in the disposition of a christian votary; that it more resembled a pagan sacrifice; and that, instead of the pious sentiments, agreeable to the occasion, which her mouth should have uttered, she profanely repeated the lines, which Cornelia, with a dagger in her hand, addressed to the manes of Pompey, when she received the news of his death. — It is true: nor did Heloisa, either at the time of taking the veil, or afterwards in life, ever pretend that she had any thing in view, than merely to obey the command of Abeillard. To have acted a part, inconsistent with this object, became not her character: She wished not to introduce the affectation of religion, where nothing religious

¹¹ Hist. Calam.

BOOK

III.

was meant: the honesty and candor of her mind revolted at the thought. Indeed, it is manifest, had Abeillard but hinted that the action would have pleased him more, with a Roman countenance, she would have met the point of a dagger, or have swallowed the deadly hemlock.

Years afterwards, turning to this event, she says to Abeillard: "I obeyed, Sir, the last tittle
" of all your commands; and so far was I unable
" to oppose them, that, to comply with your
" wishes, I could bear to sacrifice myself. One
" thing remains, which is still greater, and will
" hardly be credited: my love for you had risen
" to such a degree of phrensy, that to please you,
" it even deprived itself of what alone in the
" universe it valued (himself), and that for ever.
" No sooner did I receive your commands, than
" I quitted at once the dress of the world, and
" with it all the reluctance of my nature. I meant
" that you should be the sole possessor of what-
" ever I had once a right to call my own. Heaven
" knows, in all my love, it was you, and you
" only, that I fought for — whilst together we
" enjoyed the pleasures, which love affords, the
" motives of my attachment were to others uncer-
" tain. The event has proved on what principle
" I started. To obey you I sacrificed all my plea-
" sures: I reserved nothing, the hope only excepted,
" that so I should become more perfectly your

“ own. — For this sacrifice, if I have no merit in
 “ your eyes, vain indeed is all my labor! From
 “ God I can look for no reward, for whose sake,
 “ it is plain, I have as yet done nothing ¹².”—
 “ Through the whole course of my life, she says in
 “ another letter, heaven knows, what have been
 “ my dispositions. It was you, and not God,
 “ whom I feared most to offend; you, and not
 “ God, I was most anxious to please. My mind is
 “ still unaltered. It was no love of him, but solely
 “ your command which drew me to Argenteuil.
 “ How miserable then my condition, if, under-
 “ going so much, I have no prospect of a reward
 “ hereafter! By appearances, you may have been
 “ deceived like others: you ascribed to the
 “ impressions of religion, what sprang from another
 “ source ¹³.”

Used to contemplate in ourselves and others, human nature, as cast in common moulds, we view its eccentricities with the mixed emotions of astonishment and pleasure. Of this description was Heloisa. She was born in a century, remarkable for ignorance and a blind attachment to the weakest follies; her education, within the walls of a convent, had been little adapted to improve her understanding or to enlarge her heart; and, at the time she began and finished the bold tragedy, I

¹² Ep. Helois. 1^a.

¹³ Ep. 2^a.

BOOK

III.

have described, the blossom of life was but in its first stage of expansion: yet already she was learned, to the admiration of France, and her mind had acquired a boldness of conception, and a sufficiency in itself which carried her far beyond the ideas of her sex, and the adopted maxims of the age. In the most brilliant days of Roman greatness, Heloisa would have been a splendid character. — Her notions of moral and religious duty may be deemed too free: but my surprise rather is, from whence she could have drawn them. She had read, we know, the scriptures, and she had meditated on the works of the fathers of the church: but, as in the sense and application of the doctrine, they contained, she was told to adhere to low comments and trifling interpretations, her mind was unsatisfied: she did not find in them that sublimity of thought and fulness of idea, which could meet the expanding energy of her soul. — She turned to the compositions of the old philosophers; and she dwelt, with rapture, on the poets of Greece and Rome. Here she was free to range, unshackled by rules, and unoppressed by authority. In them the romantic cast of her soul found something which accorded with its feelings; and she became the disciple of Epicurus, of Seneca, and of Ovid, without perceiving that she had quitted the amiable purity of the christian scheme, and the severer morality of ecclesiastical

discipline. — When guides are ignorant, or when maxims are suggested, unfounded on truth or clogged with puerilities, a great mind is disgusted; it begins to think for itself; and imperceptibly adopts singularities, perhaps extravagancies: but they are the extravagancies of genius, and the errors of bold nature. When the eagle rises to meet the sun, it leaves the earth and all its beaten paths far below it.

Abeillard having completed one part of his design, hastened to the execution of the other. He had chosen the abbey of St. Denys for his retirement; and there he entered, a few days only after Heloisa had made her vows at Argenteuil ¹⁴.—The abbey of St. Denys so celebrated in French history, for the munificent donations of the living, and as the repository of the ashes of her dead kings, was not then so splendidly magnificent, as it had been. Dagobert, its founder, had covered part of the roof with plates of silver; and the internal decorations were answerable to it. It is said, that Clovis the second, at a time of public distress, unroofed the gorgeous monument, and, with a more laudable liberality, distributed it piecemeal to the necessitous. The Norman ravagers, in the ninth century, did not spare this sumptuous pile; they pillaged its riches, and

BOOK
III.

Abeillard becomes a monk at St. Denys.

¹⁴ Ep. Helois. 12.

BOOK

III.

nearly reduced the whole fabric to a heap of ruins ¹⁵. It belonged to the Benedictine order of monks; and as their revenues were immense, St. Denys soon recovered from its delapidation, and was in high splendor, when Abeillard submitted his head to the cowl. But the monastic discipline of its inhabitants, which had been broken down, as it always happens, in the general desolation, had not recovered, in the same proportion, as the edifices, which stone and mortar easily repaired.

A man of Abeillard's talents and reputation would be received with open arms. The joy was reciprocal; for here it was that he looked for repose, and in constrained lowliness of spirit, dared to hope, that the world would forget him. The world did not co-operate with his wishes. His absence from Paris was soon felt; his scholars (the number of whom, as a contemporary author relates ¹⁶, collected from all parts of Europe, exceeded whatever had before been seen,) were vociferous in their complaints; they disturbed the peace of the city; and threatened to retire, if Abeillard could not be prevailed on to resume his lectures. Other professors in vain offered their instructions. — It was resolved that deputies should wait on him in his cell ¹⁷.

The philosopher had hardly recovered from

¹⁵ Fleury, vol. xi. ¹⁶ Fulco ad Abeil. ¹⁷ Hist. Calam.

his wounds, and was beginning to taste the gentle comforts of retirement, when suddenly his reveries were interrupted, and he was publicly called on to return to the schools. In the depression of spirits, with which he had just quitted the world, confounded, penitent, and disgusted, the proposal, at first, startled him: he did not conceive it to be sincere, and he might suspect it was rather meant to ridicule, than seriously to do him honor. He refused to comply. On this they went in greater numbers; St. Denys thronged with the crowds: and first they waited on the abbot, requesting he would permit Abeillard to come to them, and would even command him to leave his cell, should he persevere in his refusal. They begged to see their old master, and to him, in the warmest terms, they urged their petition. — Would he, they said, generous and disinterested as he was, who had done so much to gratify the world and his own desires, now do nothing on the more noble principle of serving God and his religion? He should reflect, with what interest, the talents, which heaven had so liberally conferred, would be redemanded from him. Hitherto he had given his principal attention to the great and the opulent; it was time that the low and indigent also should receive benefit from his instructions. — They hinted, with some delicacy, at his late misfortune, and suggested that it had

BOOK
III.

been permitted, perhaps, for wise ends: he was now free from many incitements to vice, and withdrawn from the delusions of the world, that science might possess him more completely to herself. Now was the moment, they concluded, to become the true philosopher¹⁸. — These persuasions had not the desired effect.

But though Abeillard seemed so unwilling to re-engage in his former pursuits; it was not long before he was much disgusted with the manners of the monks of St. Denys. He describes them not only as men, departing from religious discipline, and addicted to the world, but as abandoned to the most shameful passions. The abbot he censures, in terms equally severe: “As by office, he says, he was raised above others, so was his life more criminal, and his infamy more notorious¹⁹.” — This account is thought to be unfair. He wrote it at a time of great irritation; when he had reason to conceive himself unjustly persecuted: to retaliate he dipt his pen in gall²⁰.

Let there be some exaggeration in the story; it is still well known, as I have observed, that but little of the monastic spirit was left at St. Denys. — Abeillard naturally acrimonious, from circumstances rendered more severe, and mistaking, possibly, the effects of ill-temper for the suggestions of

¹⁸ Hist. Calam.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Notæ Quercet.

pious zeal, hesitated not to declare his disapprobation of their conduct. Privately, and repeatedly, he expostulated with his brethren; but finding such remonstrances ineffectual, he publicly arraigned the enormities of their lives, and, with his powers of language, held up their crimes in full view before them. — The monks were not disposed to admit this check to their amusements; when Adam, their abbot, led the way to pleasure, was Abeillard, a monk of yesterday, whose habit had not yet lost its gloss, to become the censor of his elders, and to replant the thorns which, with the labor of years, they had been striving to eradicate: he might pursue, with tasteless perseverance, his own researches, as he pleased, and they would not interrupt his lucubrations; they only asked the same liberty for themselves, which they allowed to him ²¹. — What had fallen to the lot of other reformers, Abeillard, I presume, was prepared to expect. His advice was disregarded; perhaps it helped to increase the evil, whilst he himself became the object of universal dislike and hatred.

B O O K
III.

The young men from Paris still continued their application, and the whole convent of St. Denys was now disposed to co-operate with the petitioners. The moment was favorable to both. Abbot

He resumes
his lectures.

²¹ Hist. Calam.

B O O K Adam, such I have said was his name, gravely advised
 III. Abeillard, as nothing less could give satisfaction to his scholars, if he could possibly surmount his reluctance, to comply with their request; that it was with much difficulty he had prevailed on himself to give his approbation to the measure; that with pain he should see him quit his roof; but that no distance of place should ever untie the band which united him to St. Denys; and that, on his side, such a condescension must be considered as a heroic example of monastic virtue. — The holy brotherhood abetted the solemn farce. — The flimsy subterfuge was easily penetrated: but Abeillard, disgusted of a situation which disappointed his wishes, and flattered into better hopes by the perseverant entreaties of his friends, now thought proper to avail himself of the occasion, and to accede to their proposals. — Paris was judged too dissipated a residence for a religious man; and probably he himself, for obvious reasons, objected to it: therefore a small place in the country was chosen, where, in a few days, he opened his school²².

The news was carried to Paris, and from thence very soon it reached the more distant provinces. The conflux of scholars was incessant: there were no habitations to receive them, nor could the country supply food for the multitude²³. — Some

²² Hist. Calam. ²³ Ibid.

authors speak of more than three thousand, who, at one time, attended his lessons²⁴. — How scarce must have been the means of instruction; or how ardent the thirst to acquire it, when the reputation of one man could excite such a ferment in Europe!

B O O K
III.

Abeillard now directed the force of his genius to theological pursuits. He thought the study more analogous to the new character he had assumed; but as his scholars were very desirous to be instructed also in profane learning, to which he had himself been most habituated, he deemed it proper not to neglect the latter. The charms which, he knew, philosophy would take from his tongue, he determined to convert to a nobler purpose. When his hearers, pleased by the delightful eloquence of their master, at once admired his manner, and imbibed his doctrine, he led them on from subject to subject, and from profane to sacred, till he could fix all their attention on the great truths of revelation or the sublime attributes of the deity²⁵. — He well judged that there is a gradation in truth, and that the plainest maxims or the profoundest discoveries are but rays from one common centre. — This method, Abeillard tells us, he took from Origen, the first of christian philosophers; and it was most undoubtedly excellent: but there was

²⁴ Vie d'Abeil. 129. ²⁵ Hist. Calam.

B O O K besides a peculiar reason, why Origen should be
 III. the master he preferred to imitate.

It soon appeared, that the talents of Abeillard were equally competent to every pursuit, and that it was only exercise which had given him the first place in philosophy. He interpreted the holy scriptures, with the same facility, as the commentaries of Aristotle: and divine truths seemed to owe as much to his exposition, as did the most abstruse deductions of reason. His school daily swelled with auditors, and the benches of other professors were deserted. — If opposition should now be raised against him, it would evidently be dictated by envy or low passion. There was no competitor or proud master to irritate.

The fame of Abeillard extended, and the whole college of professors took the alarm: something, it was necessary, should be done, to save their falling interest. Two objections, it seemed, they could raise against him, and these they were resolved to enforce. He was a monk, they said, and consequently the study of profane literature was obhorrent from his profession: besides, dared he not to open the sacred volumes of scripture, and to interpret their mysterious words, when it was notorious he had never received any regular documents from a master²⁶? His treatment of the

²⁶ Hist. Calam.

renowned Anselm was well remembered. — On this ground the professors rested their opposition; and they hoped to prevail. Archbishops, bishops, abbots, and the whole description of churchmen, were importuned to espouse their quarrel.

BOOK
III.

The method, which Abeillard had adopted, was highly approved by many; and they who, hitherto, felt themselves oppressed by authority, were relieved by the rational forms, he introduced into theological discussions. What he had written, on philosophical and literary subjects, had been read with pleasure, and they flattered him that his genius, at least with equal facility, might penetrate the secrets of religion²⁷. They requested that, to the authorities either of scripture or fathers, which were generally adduced to prove the dogmas of christianity, he would superadd such elucidations, as might seem expedient to render them more agreeable to reason. The introduction of obscure terms, they thought, was futile; because what they did not understand they could not believe; and that it was ridiculous to speak of things, of which neither the master, nor his scholars, had any fixed idea: such masters might truly be called the blind leaders of the blind²⁸.

These were bold notions for the twelfth century; but they were necessary to dispel the Cimmerian

²⁷ Prolog. ad Theolog.

²⁸ Hist. Calam.

BOOK

III.

darkness, which had so long enveloped the christian world. When the seeds of moral or of physical evils have taken deep root, it is not a gentle effort which will draw them out. — The liberty of reasoning on mysterious matters had, by some philosophers, been carried to undue lengths. Proud of their logical acuteness, because, agreeably to certain rules of art, they could form a syllogism, they saw nothing, in the whole range of grace or nature, which should outstretch their comprehension. Roscelin, whom I have mentioned, had taken the lead among these philosophizing christians.

Abeillard, induced by the arguments of his scholars, and not a little prompted by his own natural bias, undertook the arduous work. He would show, that the great points of religion were not adverse to human reason; he would render them more palpable by comparisons drawn from common nature; and from the notions even of the pagan philosophers themselves, he would demonstrate how weak were the objections of modern reasoners against the mysteries of revelation. With this view, he composed and published, in three books, his *Introductio ad Theologiam* ²⁹.

Religion, observes Abeillard, has not a nobler object, than the doctrine of the *Trinity*; and the names of the three persons describe that being

²⁹ Op. Abeil. p. 973.

which is infinitely perfect. The name of the father announces power; the name of the son announces wisdom; and the name of the holy spirit announces goodness or charity. The union of these three constitutes perfection. — Nor does the distinction of persons rest here: it also tends to generate in the breast of man such sentiments, as may carry him to the adoration of his maker. On fear and love is founded respect: fear is produced by the ideas of power and wisdom: and we love that being, which is kind and beneficent.

B O O K
III.

It was this mystery, he says, which vain reason principally attacked; therefore he aims to defend it.

The founder of the christian system did but develop the mysterious Trinity. It was known, he thinks, to the prophets, and to the ancient schools of philosophers; and to the latter it was revealed, in recompence of their virtues. He praises the eminent qualifications of their minds, the purity of their manners, the excellence of their morality; and he dares to give them a seat of happiness in those regions, to which some christians, in too vain a partiality, pretend an exclusive right.

He then meets the arguments of his adversaries, and attempts to solve their subtle intricacies. He explains the nature of each person, and their

B O O K differential properties. The language he here uses is
 III. that of modern Trinitarians. — There exists not in nature, he observes, a being, in which a plurality of persons subsists with unity of essence. It is only by analogies or distant comparisons that any notion can be formed; and these must be imperfect. — The co-eternity of the persons he exemplifies by the light of the sun, which co-exists with the source of its generation or procession.

From the Trinity he turns to the power of God, and discusses the high question, whether God could have acted otherwise, than he has done, in the creation of things. He weighs, with a steady hand, the principle and the order of the divine decrees. Wisdom and goodness, he says, are the attributes, by which the almighty power is directed: they presided over all his works. If therefore there be any good, which remains unrealized, it was his wisdom which forbade its education. Every thing has been made which power, wisdom, and goodness, could effect. More than what God has done, he concludes, he could not have done; nor could he have done it otherwise; nor was he free not to have done it. — This is the doctrine of Optimism, which the great Leibnitz, in an after-age, more fully expounded, strengthening it with those powers of argument, which his vast genius was able to supply.

I have briefly stated the contents of this volume, which is written not inelegantly, and which
 contains

contains matter of profound and intricate discussion. Abeillard boldly meets the argument; he displays a considerable share of erudition and of logical acuteness; but if he flattered himself that he rendered more intelligible what was before obscure, and has ever continued so, his eye was organized to see light in darkness. There was novelty in his manner of treating religious questions; and that it was which pleased his own vanity, and raised the admiration of his readers. Less bigotted than his contemporaries, and less awed by authority, the mind of Abeillard took a wider range; but, at the same time, he expresses a diffidence of himself, and a willingness to submit his writings to the judgment of the church, and to the criticism of the learned.

The applause, which followed the publication of this work, was great: it appeared that Abeillard had drawn aside the veil, under which the doctrines of christianity had hitherto been covered; he had done away the difficulties, in which mysterious questions were involved; and he had answered the abstrusest objections of their adversaries". Novelty of expression they mistook for novelty of idea; unfounded opinions were to them authentic documents; and in his weak allusions to material objects they discovered the strongest

B O O K

III.

" Hist. Calam.

B O O K illustrations of intellectual truths. — A work of
III this nature was evidently open to sinister interpretations; and it could not be that his enemies would view it with impartial eyes.

Albericus and Lotulphus, who have been mentioned as the rivals of Abeillard, when he studied divinity under Anselm at Laon, now came forward. The animosity, they had formerly entertained against him, had increased with their years, and had grown with the reputation of Abeillard. Anselm and William de Champeaux were both dead¹¹; and to their honors it was the ambition of these two men to succeed. They were professors in Reims, and Abeillard seemed only to obstruct the spread of their reputation. When the work, I have mentioned, appeared, they read it; and it need not be said, with what dispositions. Its excellencies were no objects to them; but its blemishes they construed into shocking deformities, and its casual mistakes into monstrous errors: his deviations from common language were heretical innovations. He that looks for heterodoxy will be sure to find it. — They waited on the archbishop of their diocese, and laid the impious work at his feet¹².

For some time had the good man been ill-disposed towards Abeillard. Unable to judge for himself, he had relied on the assertions of others.

¹¹ Hist. Calam. ¹² Ibid.

Albericus and his colleague were loud in their accusations: their repeated suggestions alarmed the pious zeal of the prelate; and having raised in his mind a high opinion of their own orthodoxy, they now dared publicly to criminate Abeillard, and to demand the condemnation of his book. — By their advice, Rodolphus, such was the archbishop's name, engaged to call a synod of his suffragan bishops at Soissons. The pope's legate was then in France: him they invited to preside at their meeting, that, with one accord, they might proceed to the weighty business. Abeillard was cited to appear before the council, and to bring along with him the work he had composed. He obeyed¹³.

In the mean time, his enemies were not idle. Albericus and Lotulphus had circulated many reports against him, and the minds of the multitude were inflamed to a degree of fury. He had dared to teach, they were told, that there were three Gods — Abeillard, with a few companions, confiding in his own integrity, and unsuspecting of the machinations of his enemies, went to Soissons on the appointed day. His astonishment was great, when he heard the wild clamors of the citizens, and saw the preparations they had made to stone him to death. They would avenge, they said, the insulted honor of

He is cited before the council of Soissons, and condemned.

¹³ Hist. Galam.

BOOK
III

their maker, and not wait the slow process of a council. Abeillard, however, escaped, and presented himself before the legate".

He held his book on the Trinity in his hand: "If I have written any thing," said he in a submissive but manly tone, "which varies from the belief of my ancestors and the faith of the church, behold me prepared to retract it, or to make satisfaction. This is the work, I have written: take it, Sir; read it; and judge." — The legate, who is represented as a man of worth, well versed in political intrigue, but as no adept in theological intricacies, very politely declined the proposal, and referred Abeillard to the archbishop of Reims. The scheme probably was preconcerted: for by this means, his accusers, who were the confidential friends of the archbishop, became his judges.

Albericus and Lotulphus, proud of the censorial commission, with alacrity opened the detested volume; they weighed its contents in the unfair balance of prejudice, and with wonderful malevolence, they misconstrued, misconceived, and misrepresented. — If there be an easy task, it is to detect errors in the opinions of those who dissent from us; and never is the eye of criticism so penetrating, as when the zeal of overweening

" Hist. Calam.

orthodoxy animates the inquiry. Religion, which should temper animosity, and give a gentle check to the selfish passions, often serves to embitter controversy. We lose sight of its high and important character; our own feelings we ingraft on the venerable stock; and we arrogantly fancy it is the love of sacred truth that inspires us, when the base suggestions of our own minds are the guides which point the way.

The holy inquisitors found ample matter for reprehension: they were scandalized by novelty of expression; in words of an equivocal meaning they could read a dangerous tendency to heresy; and, at every page, their pious ears were offended; because, at every page, Abeillard had either departed from the old forms of language, or he had dared to explain what they deemed inexplicable, or he had attempted to make that appear rational, the principal merit of which consisted, they thought, in its opposition to common sense, and in a darksome intricacy of mystery. Still they were unsatisfied. A moment's reflection told them, that the fathers of the council might be more favorably inclined to Abeillard than themselves; that his book really contained nothing which was expressly heterodox; that the learning and reputation of the author were vast; and should he be permitted, in public assembly, to make his defence or to explain his

B O O K
III.

BOOK

III.

own doctrine, it might be too hazardous to expose themselves to the impetuosity of his eloquence or to the danger of a defeat. They chose then what seemed the most prudent step: they waited on the legate; they magnified the importance, and the intricacy of the business; they talked of the multiplicity of their own engagements, which hourly called them off from the main inquiry; and they proposed, as other matters were to be debated in council, that the condemnation of Abeillard might be postponed to the close of the sessions. The legate assented³⁵.

Abeillard, during the celebration of the synod, was permitted to preach in public; and every day, from the pulpit, before a large concourse of people, he selected some point of christian belief, which he explained, agreeably to the principles he had advanced in his book. His discourses gave wonderful satisfaction: such perspicuity of language, and such a comprehension of religious truths, their ears had never witnessed. "Is this the man, said they, who believes in
" three Gods, and whose doctrines, we were
" told, are detestable! He now speaks publicly,
" and where are his accusers to controvert his
" assertions? The synod draws to a conclusion;
" it was convened against Abeillard; but as yet

³⁵ Vie d'Abeil. p. 157.

“ we have not seen him at their bar. Have our
 “ prelates, perchance, discovered that themselves,
 “ rather than Abeillard, are in error “ ? ” — Such
 were the observations which all ranks of men
 openly repeated in the streets of Soissons. With
 silent indignation his enemies heard them.

At length, the fatal discovery was made by
 Albericus. With incessant labor he had wasted
 the nightly lamp, and, in anguish of mind, was
 ready to desist from all further pursuit, when
 a passage, big with the most noxious heresy, burst
 on his aching sight. With exultation he closed
 the page, threw himself on his couch for a
 momentary repose, and was ready, early in the
 morning, to wait on Abeillard. The proposition he
 meant to bring before the council, clothed in its
 most horrid features; but how could he forego the
 luxury of an anticipated triumph, over the
 author himself, in a personal interview? He
 was accompanied by some of his scholars. — When
 the usual complimentary speeches were made,
 and they had talked on some general topics:
 “ I have read your work, ” said Albericus, in
 a magisterial tone, and with a countenance,
 which spoke the swell of his heart. — “ Have
 you ? ” observed Abeillard drily. — “ I have, ”
 continued he, “ and in it my eye has fallen on a

BOOK
 III.

“ Hist. Calam.

BOOK

III.

“ proposition, from the horror of which, it
“ will be long, before my mind recovers its
“ wonted serenity. ” — Abeillard seemed rather
struck, and begged he would speak out. — “ There
“ is but one God, ” said Albericus. — “ It is
very true, ” replied Abeillard. — “ This one
“ God, continued Albericus, generated his word,
“ which is also God. ” — “ That also is true, ”
said Abeillard. — “ It is true, observed Albericus
“ smartly, and yet you dare assert, that God
“ cannot generate himself! This is the blasphemous
“ proposition. ” — The last words were uttered
with an air of the most unbounded confidence.
— Abeillard smiled: “ I will prove the truth of
“ that proposition, said he, only listen to
“ my arguments. ” — What care I for your
“ arguments, said Albericus, your reason, or
“ your common sense: is religion to be weighed
“ in their scales? Authority, Sir, the impression
“ of authority, is all I look for. ” — “ You shall
“ have authority, replied Abeillard: open that
“ work of Austin, which, I perceive, you have
“ brought with you, and you will find it. ”
Albericus turned over the leaves, but found
nothing. — “ I will show you where it is, ” said
Abeillard, taking the book into his own hands,
and immediately pointing to the following passage:
“ He who imagines that God has power to

"generate himself, is the more in error, because
 "not only God cannot do it, but because there
 "is no creature, corporal or spiritual, to which
 "the capacity can belong. No being can give
 "existence to itself".

BOOK

III.

The young men, who came with Albericus, were amazed, and blushed: their master was not so easily disconcerted. — "The passage, you have read me, said he, after some pause, is easily susceptible of a favorable interpretation." — It may, replied Abeillard; but as you asked for bare authority, any comment, it should seem, would be, at this time, rather unseasonable: and were you not, continued he ironically, so great an enemy to ratiocination and common argument, I think, I could make it appear that Albericus himself, agreeably to his own principles, has fallen into the wild heresy of those, who maintain, that the father is the son of himself." — At the sound of the word *heresy*, Albericus was no longer master of himself: what rage could dictate, he threw out against Abeillard, reproaches, menaces, abuse. "The day is at hand, said he, when neither reason nor authority shall avail your purpose". — He turned on his heel, and departed.

¹⁷ Aug. l. i. de Trin.

¹⁸ Hist. Calam.

BOOK

III.

The next day, which was the last of the council, before the chamber opened, the legate and archbishop held a long conference with the prosecutors of Abeillard, and many of their confidential friends. It was debated, what was most proper to be done with Abeillard and his book, for the condemnation of which the synod had been convoked. In the work itself, after mature examination, nothing had been discovered, which seemed to merit ecclesiastical censure, and the discourses, he had publicly delivered, were universally applauded. The legate was disposed to suspend all further prosecution, and the assembly inclined to his opinion. A general silence prevailed; his enemies did but mutter indistinct accusations; and even Albericus withheld the dreadful charge, he had threatened to produce against him. Gaufridus, bishop of Chartres, a prelate venerable for his piety and consummate learning, rose from his seat, and spoke.

“ You, who hear me, well know the profound
“ erudition of this man: to whatever studies he has
“ turned his application, you know, what applause
“ has surrounded him, and you have counted the
“ number of his followers; the high fame of the
“ professors we esteemed most, and that of his
“ own masters, you know, how easily he has
“ eclipsed; and you know, that the wide branches

“ of his reputation have reached from sea to sea.
 “ Should you pronounce a precipitate sentence
 “ against Abeillard, (of which I do not suspect
 “ you capable,) what indignation will it not
 “ raise? The tongues of thousands will be ready
 “ to defend him. We have seen that the work,
 “ in question, contains nothing which we can
 “ publicly criminate. Take care therefore that
 “ you add not to his glory by any violent pro-
 “ ceedings, and detract from your own reputati-
 “ ons in the same proportion. Would you wish
 “ to act, agreeably to the established canons of
 “ discipline? The way is open before you.
 “ Exhibit your charges in public assembly;
 “ Abeillard shall be present, and shall hear
 “ each head of accusation distinctly urged against
 “ him. His own confession, or conviction from
 “ authentic documents, will decide betwixt us;
 “ and the sentence, we shall pronounce, will
 “ impose an eternal silence on him, and meet
 “ the approbation of his warmest admirers.”

This discourse, dictated by good sense and a
 just appreciation of things, was clamorously oppo-
 sed by the adverse faction. “ The advice is
 “ admirable! said they: shall we enter the lists
 “ with a man whose verbosity is eternal? Not the
 “ world combined could long withstand his

” Hist. Calam.

BOOK "sophisms and captious argumentation." —

III. Perceiving they were not to be prevailed on to adopt the reasonable measure, Geoffrey proposed another scheme, to which, he flattered himself, the inveteracy of their prejudices might give way. Having remarked, that the cause was of considerable moment, and that the council, from the paucity of its members, was hardly adequate to the decision; he moved, that the abbot of St. Denys, who was present, should reconduct Abeillard to his convent, and that there, in a more numerous and respectable convocation, the business should be maturely weighed and terminated. — To this the legate and the rest of the company assented; and the bishop was commissioned to inform Abeillard, that he had permission to return to St. Denys *.

Albericus and Lotulphus could not approve this placid resolution: they saw there was an end to their scheme of humbling the pride of Abeillard, should his cause be tried out of the diocese of Reims, where only their voice, they knew, could command attention; besides, how humiliating was the reflection that, with all their high words, they had done nothing, and that the enemy might draw glory from their disgrace. They waited on the archbishop, whom they easily persuaded into their opinion: "Would it not

* Hist. Calam.

“ reflect ignominy on himself and them, they said,
 “ that the heretic, who had been cited to their
 “ tribunal, should be allowed to retire, uncensured
 “ and free, as he came; and that another
 “ court only should be judged competent to the
 “ puny decision: who would now dare to check
 “ the progress of the insolent innovator, if the
 “ metropolitan of Reims must truckle before
 “ him “ ? ”

Thus having obtained the consent of the archbishop to continue the prosecution, they directed their attack on the legate. But it might be no easy task to shake the resolution of a man who, but a few minutes before, had, in a public assembly, declared his sentiments. The professors knew the ground they trod on, they knew the character of the Italian prelate, and from the experience they had just had of their own powers of persuasion, they doubted little of the event. Admitted to his presence, therefore, they repeated the arguments, with many additional clauses, which had so happily succeeded with the archbishop. The legate who, in the whole business, had relied much on the opinions of others, was not unwilling, in this instance also, to surrender his own better judgment. “ But, said he, if it be
 “ your wish and that of the metropolitan, that,

“ Hist. Calam.

BOOK
III.

“ the prosecution continue, are you prepared to
“ meet Abeillard, as this is the last day of the
“ council, and the business can be protracted no
“ longer? ” — The professors hesitated: the scheme,
they had projected, they hardly knew how to
bring forward. “ Does it seem necessary to your
“ Eminence, at length said they, in the gentle
“ tone of adulation, that Abeillard appear in
“ council; that he be permitted to reply to
“ objections, and to make his own defence? —
“ And can judgment be pronounced, without
“ these conditions? observed the legate with an
“ air of indignation. — Abeillard, continued they,
“ is a man, dangerous and seductive in his
“ discourse: besides, has he not dared to open
“ public schools, legally unqualified to teach?
“ And this base volume before us, did he not
“ publish it, and did he not disperse it through
“ the christian world, without the consent of his
“ bishop, without the approbation of the church,
“ and without the sanction of the Roman pontiff? ” —
The courtly legate was visibly struck by the last
words. — “ Why then, urged the professors impe-
“ tuously, be awed by idle formalities? Let the
“ book be condemned, without further inquisi-
“ tion; and Abeillard, with his own hands, shall
“ give it to the flames. It will be an example

“ useful to the daring insolence of future innova-
 “ tors. — The measure is violent, replied the
 “ legate, but if the archbishop and you, his
 “ counsellors, deem it expedient, I shall not
 “ with-hold my consent, though I give it re-
 “ luctantly.”

The bishop of Chartres was soon apprized of the infamous resolution; and he waited on Abeillard: he acquainted him of the whole intrigue, and by what means it had been conducted. Lamenting the violence of his enemies, and the weak condescension of the legate and the archbishop; he entreated him to submit, with a manly resignation, to the will of his superiors, however unjust or imperious it might seem. He remarked, that such proceedings would bring infinite disgrace to his prosecutors, and that his own glory would only rise more resplendent from the storm. He hinted at what he had heard, that it was their final determination to move, that he be imprisoned in some convent for life. He knew, he said, that the legate acted in opposition to himself, and that as soon as he should be free from the restraints of the synod, he would immediately release him from any confinement, to which he might be sentenced. Other arguments he used to strengthen and to console him. — Abeillard was thunderstruck,

“ Hist. Calam.

BOOK III. and the unexpected vengeance of his enemies unmanned him: he promised to submit. The bishop again spoke comfort to him, and, in retiring, showed how much he pitied his cruel fate: his good heart melted into tears, and they were mingled with those of Abeillard²¹.

In a few minutes, Abeillard was summoned before the council. He appeared. The legate abruptly announced the final resolution. "It is our will, said he, that you burn your own book." — A fire was lighted before him: Abeillard seized the volume, and threw it into the flames.

The arbitrary measure, and the promptitude, with which Abeillard submitted, struck the assembly. It was necessary to weaken this impression: the legate, more than any other, showed marks of dissatisfaction: a friend to the measure therefore whispered in his ear: "I saw this horrible sentence in his book; that God the Father is alone almighty!" — The legate caught the words, and rising, with an amazed countenance, said: "There is not a school-boy, that could err so grossly: the common faith of Christendom professes to believe, that there be three almighties." — *And yet there be not three almighties, but one almighty*, jeeringly exclaimed a learned doctor, who stood in the assembly,

²¹ Hist. Calam.

quoting

quoting the symbol of Athanasius. — His remark was censured as a petulant attack on the dignity of their president. — Terricus, such was the name of the bold divine, nothing daunted by the general clamor, proceeded in the words of Daniel: "Why are you thus foolish, children of Israel? Not judging, or knowing what is true, you have condemned a son of Israel; return to judgment. You have chosen a judge," continued he, who might instruct us in truth, and correct error; and this judge stands condemned in his own words: remember the fate of Sufanna; and do you also free Abeillard from the hands of his unjust accusers." — The attack was pointed and forcible; but should it pass unnoticed, the consequences might be serious. The archbishop, with much solemnity, rose from his seat. "My Lord Cardinal, said he, in a small change of words, has spoken the language of Athanasius: *The Father is almighty, the Son is almighty, and the Holy Ghost is almighty.* He who dissents from this is a heretic: we shall not listen to his defence."

He then told the assembly that, if agreeable to their wishes, he would propose that Abeillard make a public profession of his faith before them; that if orthodox, it might be approved; if heterodox, be censured. — The philosopher showed the utmost willingness; but as he was beginning

B O O K to speak, his adversaries called out, that his words
III. were not required; that the symbol of Athanasius would be a better test of his belief. They presented the symbol to him: "You may not be much versed in that sacred formulary, said they sneeringly, or your memory may deceive you." — The ceremony, with all its circumstances, was too humiliating: the greatest man in the literary world was reduced to the puerile task of reading his profession of faith. Any child, says he, might have done as much. — He read, he sighed, he sobbed, he wept; whilst his enemies exulted, and the council, in secret triumph, looked down on the fallen man".

As if guilty, and fully convicted of atrocious errors, Abeillard was then delivered into the hands of the abbot of St. Medard. This was a celebrated convent in the town of Soissons; and they meant he should there remain, as in the secure confinement of a prison. The abbot took him by the hand, and conducted him to his cloister. — Thus ended the council of Soissons, in the year 1121, much to the satisfaction of the archbishop of Reims, and of those malignant divines, who had so inveterately persecuted Abeillard. At this time, he was in the forty-second year of his age". — The whole account of this transaction is likewise, to all appearance, too

" Hist. Calam.

" Fleury, vol. xiv.

deeply colored, as I have already, on other occasions, remarked: but the memoirs of Abeillard are the only sources of information.

BOOK
III.

The abbot of St. Medard was a man of great worth; and we are told that his monks were not less remarkable for their literary endowments, than for the exemplary conduct of their lives⁴⁶. In such a society, Abeillard, it seems, might have been happy, if happiness could be found in involuntary confinement. They received him with the strongest indication of joy: but sympathizing, at the same time, with him in his hard treatment, they commiserated his fate; they endeavoured to console him; they censured the conduct of his judges; they applauded his heroic submission; they spoke of the number of his admirers; they reviewed the splendid career of his literary life; they extolled the erudition and wonderful perspicuity of his writings; and they promised him a greater increase of fame, from the lowering sky which, at the present moment, seemed to cloud his horizon. Could he be contented to honor their humble retreat with his presence, how brilliant would be the days of St. Medard! They, at least, knew how to value the treasure they possessed, and should it remain with them, their happiness was complete⁴⁷.

He is confined at St. Medard.

⁴⁶ Vie d'Abeil. p. 185.

⁴⁷ Hist. Calam.

BOOK

III.

The soul of Abeillard was too gloomy to admit one ray of comfort; and the soothing speeches of his new brethren and their abbot hardly seemed to reach his ears. He begged to be shewn to his cell. — Anguish, shame, despair, there rushed upon his mind: “And it is thus, thou God of justice, said he, that thou showest the equity of thy judgments! Is it in chastising the innocent, that thou pretendest to vindicate the ways of thy providence to man! If I am, made to be miserable, collect all thy vengeance, and crush the worm, that merits not, it seems the notice of its maker.” — The blasphemous sound fell upon his heart, and he paused. — “But what was that misfortune, continued he in a less raging tone, which I once suffered, and for which I deemed myself the most miserable of mortals, when compared with this? Pain of body bears no competition with pain of mind. I was then betrayed, infamously abused: but here my reputation suffers; the glory of my life is blasted for ever. My previous conduct had then been bad; I own, it called for chastisement: But now, when the purest intention, when solicitude for the honor of religion, guided all my views, and urged me to the defence of truth; I am basely traduced;

“ Hist. Calam.

“ I am treated as the enemy to God and his holy
“ altars ”. — His strength was exhausted, and
he sank spiritless to the earth. BOOK
III.

The arbitrary proceedings of the council no sooner got wind, than a very general clamor was raised against them: indeed, the most partial apologist could not pretend to justify such conduct. The heads of the cabal were even ashamed of themselves, and durst not meet the public reprehension. From their own, they tried to throw the blame on other shoulders. The legate, more than any other, felt the reproof of his conscience, and freely censured his own weak condescension: but to the intrigue and base jealousy of the French faction, he said, the whole infamy of the transaction was ascribable. The reparation, he was able to make to Abeillard, and to the violated rights of ecclesiastical discipline, he was ready to perform. The bishop of Chartres could but applaud the public displeasure, and if he concealed the detail of circumstances which himself had witnessed, it proved that the delicacy of his mind kept pace with the honesty of his heart. Even Albericus and Lotulphus were seen to blush; but versed in the quibbles of sophistry they could

“ Hist. Calam.

BOOK III. evade conviction, and almost ward off the point of censure ⁵⁰.

Abeillard had been but a few days at St. Medard, when the legate, to silence the general murmur, and from a conviction of its expediency, and also thinking he had done enough for the gratification of a faction, whose absolute displeasure, it is said, he was not willing to incur, gave notice to the prisoner, that he was at liberty to quit his confinement, and to return to St. Denys ⁵¹.

To quit confinement was a pleasing circumstance; but to return to St. Denys might not be quite so eligible. The news of the first, Abeillard received with rapture: it was an unexpected gleam that at once dissipated the cloudy horrors of his mind; because it told himself and the world, that his confinement had been unjust, that his treatment in the council had been unmerited, that his doctrine had been orthodox, that the flames, which consumed his work, had been lighted up by the breath of envy, of malevolence, of false zeal, or of misjudging dulness.

To return to St. Denys was a serious reflection. His mind recollected the unpleasant hours he had spent in that house of dissipation; and when he compared with it the gentle manners, the religious deportment, the philosophic gravity, and the endearing attention, of the monks of St.

⁵⁰ Hist. Calam. Vie d'Abeil.

⁵¹ Ibid.

Medard, he felt a secret propension which seemed to tie him to his cell. But the hand of arbitrary despotism had confined him there; and should he, from the freest determination, resolve to remain, would it be ascribed to its real motive? No, should the consequences of his removal prove ever so personally disagreeable, the world and his enemies should know that he was free.

BOOK
III.

His reception at St. Denys was not auspicious. He read on the countenances of his brethren, that they were little pleased by his return. For this he was prepared. He observed in their behaviour the same looseness, in their conversation the same impudence, in their table the same intemperance, and, at all times, the same disrelish for serious application and abstracted retirement. Experience might have taught him prudence; but the natural impetuosity of his temper, now only exulcerated by ill-usage, made him more severe, and he repeated the harsh reproaches, which they had heard so often from his mouth. — Abeillard resumed his studies, and in solitude sought for comforts, which the society of his brethren could not give him⁵².

⁵² Hist. Calam.

BOOK

III.

Thus a few months passed. — Reading in his cell the works of Bede, his eye accidentally fell on a passage, where the venerable man, expounding the *Acts of the Apostles*, says, that Denys the Areopagite, whom St. Paul converted to the christian faith, was afterwards made bishop of Corinth, and not of Athens. If this be so, thought he, then are the monks of this convent, and the French nation itself, much deceived, who fancy they possess, within these walls, the body of the Areopagite; for their St. Denys, they insist, was bishop of Athens. — “Here, said he jestingly, “to some of the monks who were passing by, I “can now overthrow your most favorite opinion:” and he showed them the lines in Bede. — They read and reddened. “Bede, said they in great “heat, is a lying scribbler: we well know “the thousand fables, which swell his ostentatious “volumes. It is to Hilduinus, abbot formerly “of this convent, that we give our faith. To “ascertain, for ever, the important question, “he travelled himself into Greece, searching “every corner of the land, and having found “the truth, he left it as a certain document “to future ages, that Denys, the Areopagite, “was bishop of Athens, and that we possess “his bones”.

“Hist. Calam.

It was no time for altercation; nor did the subject merit it. Abeillard only smiled, and was silent. But the business was not to be composed so easily. They repeated their observations, extolled Hilduinus, and calumniated Bede. — “ You shall tell us positively your own sentiment, ” said one of them with importunity; which is “ the most to be relied on, Bede or Hilduinus? ” — Abeillard declined answering. They urged him to it. — “ If I must speak then, said he, I own I cannot avoid preferring the authority of Bede, whose works are read and admired, through “ the whole Latin church.”

The reply was blasphemous. Had he denied the prophets, or reviled the religion of Christ, it would have sounded less horribly in their ears. They called him heretic, an enemy to his country, and the calumniator of their holy order. It was now plain, they observed, what had ever been his dispositions towards the convent of St. Denys; nor was it less plain, how little he valued the glory of the Gallic name: dared he not impiously to tear down the palladium, on which rested the splendid security of its fame; the holy patronage of Denys, the Areopagite, bishop of Athens! — Abeillard in vain strove to sooth their anger. He told them, he had himself formed no decided opinion; that he wished to be informed; that he had barely spoken of the comparative authority,

BOOK III. of Bede; that he entertained no ideas, hostile to the French name; but that, indeed, he could not discover, why it must be thought a matter of such importance, that the bones, in their church, should be those of the Areopagite, provided it were allowed, that their Denys was a glorious saint⁵⁴.

The convent was instantly in an uproar, and the monks hurried to their abbot, to apprise him of the event. He heard it with the mixed emotions of dismay and satisfaction. It was melancholy, he felt, that a monk of St. Denys should dare to harbour in his breast an opinion, so derogatory from its honor; but he was pleased, that Abeillard should be the man. Now, he flattered himself, he should have it more effectually in his power to chastise him, than had had the synod of Soissons; and the reflections he had made on the intemperance of his conduct had long hung, like a poisoned arrow, in his heart⁵⁵.

The chapter assembled, and Abeillard appeared before them. It was unnecessary to expose, in many words, the atrocity of his crime. The abbot, in solemn language, deplored his obduracy, and threatened him with the heavy vengeance of his own arm and of St. Denys. Nor was that all: "I will write instantly to the king, said he; he

⁵⁴ Hist. Calam. ⁵⁵ Ibid.

“ must avenge his own cause; for seditiously you
 “ have assailed the glory of his empire, and raised
 “ your hand against the sacred diadem. Let him
 “ be guarded with the most careful vigilance, till
 “ my messenger return “.”

B O O K

III.

Abeillard could hardly believe they were serious: the whole business had rather the appearance of a solemn farce: but when the countenance of his abbot, and the gestures of the monks, had convinced him they were in earnest; “ If I have been
 “ guilty of any fault, said he, I am ready to
 “ submit to whatever punishment, in the order
 “ of monastic discipline, you may judge proper
 “ to inflict.”—He was not heard, and they dragged him to his cell.

The reader, who may know, with what warmth, this question, even in the most enlightened period, has been agitated by the French critics, will not be surprised that, in the twelfth century, in the convent itself of St. Denys, it should have raised such a ferment. At length, I believe; the weighty point is decided; for it seems generally agreed among the learned, that Denys the Areopagite suffered martyrdom at Athens in the year 95; and that the other Denys did not come into France till towards the beginning of the third century. He was made first bishop of Paris, and was

⁵⁵ Hist. Calam.

B O O K martyred some years after; when as abbot Hilduin-
 III. nus, the author of the whole fable, whom I have
 mentioned, relates, he picked up his own head
 from the ground, and walked away with it. His
 body rests in the noble abbey which bears his
 name⁵⁷.

He escapes
 in the night.

Abeillard, though again in desolation, was not
 disposed to sink under it. This new insult was
 exasperating, and it roused his passions. If
 fortune had conspired against him, and the world
 must be his foe, he had himself only to look to:
 and where is the man who bears not within his
 own breast an anchor, on which he may securely
 rest, when billows roll around him? But it was
 not prudent to expose himself to all the fury of
 his enemies, nor to wait till the messenger should
 return from the king. The exaggerated and false
 reports, which would be carried to his majesty,
 might rouse him to too signal a vengeance. He
 determined to escape from St. Denys.

This escape, however, could not be so easily
 effected. The guards that watched him were
 vigilant, and they were animated to their office
 by the severe orders of their superiors, and by
 their own personal dislike to the prisoner. But
 for the honor of human nature, never was there
 a man in distress, who did not find a friend.—

⁵⁷ Fleury, Nat. Alex. and others.

Among the monks of St. Denys were some few, who could see the exalted virtues of Abeillard, and could admire them; who could behold the depraved conduct of their brethren, and could pity Abeillard who was exposed to their resentment. Abeillard in their looks read the emotions of their hearts: they had eluded his keepers, and approached him, and he saw the tear of compassion standing in their eyes. He opened his heart to them, and told them his design. — “ We will favor your escape, said they; fear not. We are men, and pity you. When the convent shall be sunk to rest, be ready at the door of your cell: leave the rest to us.” — The hour came: some of his old scholars, who had engaged to be the companions of his flight, were posted near the convent: his keepers were bribed or withdrawn: the signal was given; and Abeillard came out from his cell, blessing the indulgent night, which, more than once, had been propitious to his designs⁵⁸.

When we review these extraordinary scenes, in which Abeillard has been engaged, we shall certainly be disposed to think rather favorably of him. In the first part of his life, a natural petulance of mind, heightened by ambition, and often by vanity, had hurried him into controversy, and acrid altercations with his masters. When he

Reflections.

⁵⁸ Hist. Calam. Vie d'Abeil. p. 206.

B O O K III. suffered, we did not pity him. — The tragical event, which then succeeded, we also ascribed to his own misconduct; and I think, we may say, that he deserved it. — But we have lately beheld him persecuted without cause, smarting under the lash of malevolence, traduced where praise should have crowned his labors, and made a butt, against which, ignorance and false zeal, dulness and rancorous jealousy, pride and licentious depravity, directed their shafts. — The exultation of mind which swelled his heart in prosperity, seemed to leave him so enfeebled, when the hour of distress came, that, like a reed, the gentlest blast could bend him. He possessed not the ordinary courage of a man: he desponded, hung his head, and looked for the womanly consolation of solacing his grief in tears.

These observations must be just; for they are founded on the very circumstantial detail he gives of his own adventures and sufferings. When he speaks of his own weaknesses, he may be credited: he even seems to have indulged an extraordinary vanity in the narration: but in the account he gives of other men, of their transactions, and of the motives by which, he says, they were led, great allowance must be made; and I am sometimes almost inclined to believe, that he loved himself, better than he did truth: or, at all events, so dark was the medium, through which he viewed the conduct of others, as it related to

himself, that he had it not in his power to form an equitable and candid judgment. Round his own person played a bright and brilliant sunshine, which cast light and amiability on every thought, every design, every undertaking, every action. So he fancied. — Such was Abeillard.

BOOK
III.

Heloisa he seemed to have forgotten. Absorbed in himself, where was the object, that deserved a moment's thought, if it could not minister to his own happiness? The fancied magnitude of his misfortunes so filled his mind, that there was no room for the cares of others. Heloisa, immured in her cell, could give joy to no other man, and Abeillard was satisfied. Alluding to this period, she says to him: "But how has it happened, tell me, that after my retreat from the world, which was all your own work, I have been so neglected, or so forgotten, that you never came, either personally to recreate my solitude, or ever wrote a line to console me. If you can, account for this conduct; or I must tell you my own suspicions, which are also the general suspicions of the world. It was passion, Abeillard, and not friendship, which drew you to me; it was not love, but a more base propension. The incitements to pleasure removed, every other more honorable sentiment, to which they might seem to give life, has vanished with them."

" Ep. Helois. 1^a.

BOOK

III.

The persecutions, to which his doctrinal ideas exposed him, give a strong portrait, of the times; but it is a portrait, I fear, which, with some little variation, may be made to represent almost every era of human existence. Yet we are struck when we see Abeillard before the council of Soissons, treated with such unmerited severity, and we feel comfort in the reflection, that we do not live in so intolerant an age. Comfort we may feel; but he, I think, who, with some attention, has observed the real character even of the present times, will be ready to acknowledge that, if they are less intolerant, it is not because either their principles or their passions are different, but because they dare not, or are ashamed, to profess them. The philosophy of a few, the christian moderation of others, the religious indifference of many, and the modish vices of more, have gained so much on the bigotry, the superstition, the false zeal, the fanaticism of the multitude, that he who dares to be intolerant is laughed at, and he who would persecute is ridiculed.

Yet what are the points which, in the times I am describing, could so warm the breasts of churchmen, and which, in 1786, would perhaps communicate to the same order of men an equal portion of holy fire, were the impediments removed, which I have mentioned? View them

them abstractedly, as they are generally considered, and it will be found that, they regard not the important worship of our maker, nor the great interests of religion, nor the good of society, nor moral worth, nor our own improvement in virtue, justice, and piety. It has been said, with some semblance of truth, that the holy founder of the christian system, therefore expressed certain doctrines in ambiguous or mysterious language, that men who, he knew, from variety of character, could never adopt unity in belief, might not indeed be free to think as they pleased, (for his language is sufficiently perspicuous,) but that, when they differed from one another, they might find indulgence. If such was his intention, how much have we striven to counteract the wise arrangement? We have quarrelled, and have persecuted, and have tormented one another, with as much presumption, and with the same stubborn acrimony, even when we owned the matters in litigation were impenetrable to human reason, as if they had been self-evident principles, or the most obvious maxims in common life.

And what is it that can rouse this preternatural zeal? When our interest is engaged, or the business comes home to our own feelings, then, I conceive, we may be ardent, we may rush into opposition, or into faction: but when the object is as remote as earth from heaven; when it constitutes,

BOOK perhaps, a part of those essential attributes, which
III. the deity has pleased to conceal from us, in the
dark abyss of his own infinitude: when he has
not constituted us his delegates, to represent his
person, or to vindicate his rights: why are we
arrogantly to erect a tribunal, and call our equals
before it? He who made us what we are,
would very willingly, I presume, dispense with
the forwardness of our zeal, and be more satisfied,
that we lived as men, in the improvement of
our own natures, and left the things above us
to that administration, the wisdom and beneficence
of which are best adapted to the important
work.

END OF THE THIRD BOOK.

THE

HISTORY

OF THE LIVES OF

ABEILLARD and HELOISA.

BOOK IV.

The count of Champagne protects Abeillard — The story of Stephen de Garlande — Abeillard retires into the forest of Nogent — He is visited in the forest, and again begins to teach — He builds the Paraclet — Norbert of Premontre — Bernard of Clairvaux — Miracles — Abeillard is chosen abbot of St. Gildas — Argenteuil taken from the nuns — Heloisa goes to Paraclet — Abeillard is again censured — He fixes at St. Gildas, and is persecuted by his monks.

Anno, 1122.

ABEILLARD, with the few companions of his flight, found himself, by break of day, not far from the spot, to which he had retired, and where he had taught, when, as the reader will recollect, he was suddenly called before the synod of Soissons. The place, indeed, belonged to the

BOOK
VI.

The count of
Champagne
protects
Abeillard.

B O O K
 IV. abbey of St. Denys, but it lay in the territories of the count of Champagne¹. The count, named Theobald, though a vassal of the French king, was, in other regards, agreeably to the feudatory tenures of the age, an independent prince. Here, should the abbot of St. Denys be disposed to prosecute his subject, or should Lewis of France attempt to punish the culprit, who had dared to think that the patron of his nation might not have been bishop of Athens, Abeillard knew he should be secure, and be protected from insult.

Theobald, a nobleman of splendid virtues, and the great patron of learning, was no stranger to the character of Abeillard. He had seen him, on former occasions, and he had heard the story of his misfortunes and his oppressions: he received him with proper marks of attention; and having inquired into the cause of a visit so unexpected; "In what, said he, can I serve you, Abeillard?"—The philosopher only asked for an asylum, for the common protection which the persecuted may claim.

Near to the gates of Provins, a small town in Champagne, was situated a monastery, the prior of which was the intimate friend of Abeillard. To the roof of this friend he begged leave to retire; and the favor was instantly granted. The

¹ Hist. Calam.

good prior came out to meet him; and his countenance showed that warmth of benevolence, which the full heart, on such occasions only, can express. Abeillard entered, and felt himself happy: he had escaped from danger, and he was now in the arms of a sincere and sympathizing friend².

In the collection of his works is a letter, which he seems to have written, immediately on his arrival at Provins, to the abbot and monks of St. Denys. It is addressed, in the language of insincerity, to *his most dear father, Adam, by the grace of God, abbot of St. Denys, and to his beloved brothers and co-monks*. Himself he styles, *a monk in dress, in conduct a sinner*. — He says not a word of his precipitate flight, nor alludes to any circumstance of his present situation. The whole letter is on the ridiculous dispute about Denys, the Areopagite. Having considered the point more maturely, or apprehensive, perhaps, that the enemy might dare to pursue him into his secure intrenchments, he is disposed to give up the authority of Bede, and to join those, whose weight, he thinks, should preponderate. It is a weak piece of criticism, and does no more honor to his head, than it did to his heart. What effect it had at St. Denys, we are not told: Abeillard, in his memoirs, does not even mention the circumstance of having written the letter.

² Hist. Calam.

BOOK

IV.

He had not been many days at St. Ayoul, such was the name of the convent, when, to his great surprise, he was informed, that the abbot of St. Denys was come to Provins. It was a visit to the count, on business regarding his monastery. Abeillard thought the moment favorable; and should he be able to prevail on the count, to be his intercessor, he doubted little of the success of his scheme. In company of the prior he waited on Theobald: his request was, that he would petition the abbot to pardon the fault he had committed, by leaving his cell without permission, and that he would grant him leave to practise the life of a monk, in any retirement, which might be agreeable to him¹.

The abbot heard the proposal with attention; and he answered the count, that he was sorry it was not in his power immediately to comply with his request, but that he would lay it before the monks, who had accompanied him, and that, before night, the result of their opinions should be notified to him.—The confraternity assembled. It was very evident, they thought, that Abeillard's intention was to retire into some other convent; and would not this reflect dishonor on St. Denys? However much his conduct might be displeasing to them; he was a man of vast erudition, raised

¹ Hist. Calam.

to the highest pitch of literary glory; was admired by the world, and must be considered as a jewel of immense value, which they could not surrender into other hands. When he had taken the resolution of quitting the world, it was St. Denys he had preferred to every other monastic establishment. — They therefore unanimously resolved not to comply with his requisition; and the same was made known to the count of Champagne. They went further: on the spot, it was signified to Abeillard that, if he did not forthwith return to St. Denys, they should issue a sentence of excommunication against him; and, at the same time, the honest prior, his protector, was very solemnly threatened, that a like censure should fall on him also, if he dared to retain Abeillard any longer in his convent*.

The two friends felt the harsh impressions of this imperious mandate, but how could it be opposed? — The abbot, with his monks; returned, and, in a few days, news was brought that heaven had called him to a country, where abbots surrender the ensigns of their dignity, and the humble monk is compelled to obey no longer.

Suger, a name of high renown in the annals of French history, was chosen successor to Adam, in the abbacial honors of St. Denys. He had

* Hist. Calam.

BOOK entered very young into the conventual profession,
IV. had been educated, in company with Lewis, son to Philip the first, in the convent of St. Denys; and when the prince came to the throne in 1108, he was called to court, where he became the friend and the counsellor of his master. At this time, he was absent from the kingdom, on an embassy to Callixtus the second, pope of Rome, and was returning home, when a messenger from St. Denys informed him, that his abbot was dead, and that he was chosen to succeed him¹.

Abeillard was delighted with the news of this promotion: he could look for every indulgence from the liberal and beneficent character of Suger. The bishop of Meaux had also declared himself his friend, and with him he waited in person on the new abbot. They expressed their sincere gratulations on the occasion; and then Abeillard presented the same petition, which had been before rejected. Suger, though a man of the world and condescending in his dispositions, was not, however, blind to what he deemed the interest of his abbey. The proposal made to him he could not comply with; he saw it in the light it had appeared to others but he obligingly permitted his petitioner: to return to Provins, requesting he would revolve the important matter more

¹ Fleury, vol. xiv.

seriously in his mind, and that he would not think of quitting a house, which held his abilities in esteem, and admired his virtues. The philosopher was little flattered by the courtly address of his abbot, and he took his leave, resolute not to desist from a scheme, on which his happiness seemed so much to depend. He was advised to convey his petition to the foot of the throne*.

There was then in the court of Lewis, a very favorite nobleman, Stephen de Garlande, who held the first offices about the crown, and whose interest was irresistible. This man engaged to befriend Abeillard; nor could his cause be in better hands. When Suger came next to court, de Garlande took him aside: "And what motive," said he to him, "can impel you to detain Abeillard, among you, against his free consent? The austerity of his manners does, by no means, agree with the temper of your convent: his reproaches bring disgrace upon you, even in the eye of the world; and where is the advantage in possessing such a subject? Believe me, dismiss him, Suger; and think yourselves happy to be freed, upon such easy terms, from a man, who is, and ever will be, a galling thorn in your sides." -- There was an artful policy in this advice, which Suger seems not to have penetrated: De Garlande and

* Hist. Calam.

BOOK

IV.

the courtiers apprehended, that Abeillard, who, they knew, was incessantly inveighing against the undisciplined lives of the monks, might perhaps so far succeed as to give a check to their excesses. This they wished not to see. In its present state, St. Denys was more dependent on the will of his majesty, who, by threats of a reform, could at any time draw from them what sums, the exigencies of his crown, or the extravagances of his favorites, were disposed to call for⁷.

Suger, when he understood that it was the will of his master that Abeillard should be released, was too experienced a courtier to oppose it any longer. He gave his consent, but on such terms as he was yet free to prescribe. The parting with so great a man, he knew, would reflect disgrace on his abbey: Abeillard therefore, he said, might quit St. Denys, provided he would be satisfied to retire to some lonely wilderness, and never subject himself to the rule of any other religious institute. By this clause, he conceived, the honor of his house would be maintained: it could not be said that he had left it in quest of higher honors, or in quest of a perfection which might in some other convent be found, and St. Denys had not to give. In the presence of the king, these conditions were formally subscribed to by both parties; and Abeillard, once more was at liberty.

⁷ Hist. Calam.

Stephen de Garlande, on this occasion the friend of Abeillard, was a man as extraordinary in his fortune, as he was in his character. When very young, and not yet in holy orders, ignorant, dissipated, and debauched, he was elected to the episcopal see of Beauvais; but the pope refused to ratify his nomination. He did not however quit the church, wherein he soon after received the order of deacon, and by his wonderful address making his way to the affections of the king, he rose to the high office of chancellor of the realm. On the death of William, his elder brother, he succeeded to the charge of Seneschal, which was then the post of the greatest honor and power in the French court, comprising in itself, what were afterwards the distinct offices of grand master of the household and of constable. Stephen wore his high honors with splendor; but he wanted sense and moderation to rein his ambition and the native pride of his heart. So great was the ascendancy he held over his master's dispositions, that it was sometimes said that Stephen, rather than Lewis, wielded the sceptre of France. With too much appearance of sovereignty, he aimed to extend this control also, over the queen his mistress. She opposed his wild pretensions; when the intoxicated favorite, who no longer prescribed limits to his insolence, dared publicly to insult her. He did not reflect, that an irritated woman is a dangerous enemy.

BOOK

IV.

The story of
Stephen de
Garlande.

BOOK

IV.

Adelaide watched the favorable moment, and represented to the king, “ that Stephen, the
“ proud minister of his court, was become
“ intolerable to the nobles of his realm, and that
“ the people, worn down by his oppressions,
“ would submit no longer; that to behold an
“ ecclesiastic, sometimes at the head of armies,
“ and then discharging the civil offices of the
“ state, was a circumstance which raised general
“ scandal and disgust; that she herself could not
“ brook his haughty and insultive demeanour;
“ and that to her husband she must now fly for
“ protection against the tyranny of a man, who
“ could, at every moment, forget the duties,
“ he owed to her rank and dignity; but that
“ there was another circumstance, which came
“ nearer to her heart than all this: Lewis,
“ continued she, in the favors you shower down
“ upon de Garlande, you forget yourself: are
“ you sensible that the prince, who delegates
“ his essential prerogatives to a minister, tears
“ from his own brow that sacred character, which
“ gives him respect in the eye of the multitude.”—
The forcible address had its desired effect. The king sent an order to de Garlande instantly to surrender into his hands all the insignia of office, and to retire from court.

He did retire; but he refused to resign his charge of Seneschal, which was become hereditary, he

said, in his family, and he flew to arms. In a moment the kingdom was in a ferment; Stephen rode from province to province, and thousands joined his standard. De Montfort, who had married his niece, pressed the king to reinstate him in his honors; but in vain. Henry of England engaged in the quarrel, and Theobald of Champagne was on his march to succour the fallen favorite. However, the good fortune of Lewis prevailed, and de Garlande was reduced to submission. The queen, alarmed by the troubles, which innocently she had excited, interceded for peace. Some time after, Stephen was again taken into favor, and new honors were conferred upon him. Thus, in the tranquil enjoyment of dignity, he spent some years, when he retired voluntarily from the scene, and died dean of the chapter of Orleans, the mitre of which he had refused*.

BOOK
IV.

It was but a dreary prospect, which Abeillard had before him, when, agreeably to the conditions he had signed, he left St. Denys. He was poor; and was he sure he should find friends who would be disposed to relieve him? Penury, however, he considered, with all its attendant evils, was far preferable to the disgusting enormities of the abbey, he had left behind him; and having

Abeillard re-
tires into the
forest of No-
gent.

* Daniel. t. iii. Vie d'Abeil. p. 222.

BOOK

IV.

experienced how little his dispositions were calculated to coalesce with folly, and how many were the torments, which society supplied, his mind began to warm with the reflection, and he flattered himself that the happiness, perhaps, which hitherto he had sought for in vain, might be found at a distance from the habitations of men. Thus pensively he pursued his journey.

As formerly he had wandered through the forests of Champagne, he had observed a spot, the recollection of which now returned upon his mind. It was a small sequestered vale, surrounded by a wood, not distant from Nogent-sur-Seine, and a rivulet ran near its side. It did not appear that the foot of any mortal had hitherto disturbed its solitude. To this place Abeillard hastened, and he spent his first night, as did the other tenants of the forest, protected only by the wide branches which spread over his head. Heloisa says, it was, at that time, the receptacle of wild beasts, and the retreat of robbers; that it had not seen the habitations of men, or known the charms of domestic life*. — He had one companion, who was an ecclesiastic.

Abeillard, delighted with the novelty of his situation, (for when the mind is warmed by a degree of enthusiasm, it can discover beauties in a

* Ep. Helois. 1^a.

wilderness,) waited on the owners of the land, and expressed to them his wishes of becoming an inhabitant of their woods. The undertaking was then no unusual thing; and they very freely gave their consent, and even made him a present of any extent of soil, he might chuse to occupy. — The philosopher returned, and had soon measured out the district, which could bound his desires. — His next step was to apply to the bishop of Troyes, in whose diocese his new possessions lay, for permission to build a small oratory. This likewise was granted. — Without loss of time, Abeillard then and his companion, planned the new building, and with the same hands began to erect it. The materials were not distant, nor was great skill required to put them together. They collected some bows of trees; these they tied with twigs; and the structure rose visibly into form before their eyes. — Having completed what they called their oratory, and solemnly dedicated it to the holy Trinity, to express his disapprobation of the unitarian system, which his enemies had also imputed to him, they constructed a second building, which was to be their own dwelling. This, it may be presumed, was not more highly finished than the temple they had dedicated to their maker¹⁰.

Seldom had Abeillard been more happy than at this busy moment. Free from anxious cares, his

¹⁰ Hist. Calam.

BOOK IV. mind enjoyed the present object. It was not brilliant indeed ; but it occupied him. He had escaped from troubles ; the voice of malevolence sounded no longer in his ears ; and persecution ceased to oppress him. It was the situation of a weary traveller , who , at the end of his journey , lays down his heavy burden , and feels contented , because the load , which pressed him to the earth , is taken from his shoulders. — Abeillard rose with the sun to adore his maker ; he thanked him for the repose he enjoyed , and he lamented the follies of his life. The day he spent in study , or in conversation with his friend , to whom he recounted the adventures and the perils he had gone through. The water of the brook allayed his thirst , and of the very scanty provisions , which the forests of Champagne could supply , he made his meal. With the birds , which sang round him , he retired to rest ; and he laid his head down on the turf , careless and undisturbed. — A mind , like his , could not indeed circumscribe itself within the precincts of his lonely habitation : it would range the ideal world ; enter there into active scenes ; and sometimes perhaps be pleased with the prospect of future honors and renown. But foresee he could not , that this career of glory was ready to open in the very wilderness , which seemed to have put an eternal bar to the familiar intercourse of mortals.

When

He is visited
in the forest,
and again
begins to
teach.

When it was publicly known, that Abeillard was again an independent man, and had seceded entirely from the world, the lovers of science, and many who had before been his scholars, inquired anxiously for his abode, resolved, could the learned solitary be discovered, to put themselves under his tuition, and once more to draw science from his lips. Their search was soon crowned with success: they found him situated, as I have described, in the forest near Nogent; and they opened their wishes to him.—Abeillard in vain resisted; he saw every avenue to his hermitage filling with young men, and crowds were round him, before he had time to take the advice of friends, or to consult the feelings of his own heart. The step could not at first seem pleasing, unless already the pure delights of solitude had begun to pall upon his mind. With one voice they requested, he would again become their master. He showed them his humble cell, the oratory he had raised, and he pointed to the wilderness, which their eager steps had just penetrated. “Your proposal, said he to them, is “inconsiderate. I can but applaud your thirst after “knowledge; and the choice you make of me “for an instructor, is truly flattering. But you “forget yourselves. In a moment, this dreary “spot will teach you, that science, without the

BOOK "conveniences of life, is not worth pursuing".

IV. — His remonstrance was to little purpose: when the mind is strongly bent to an object, the view of ordinary difficulties does but animate its exertions.

"If want of conveniences, said they, be the obstacle which stands in our way, we will soon remove it."—An extraordinary interesting scene now commenced. They looked round them, when, after a short conference, it was determined that, in imitation of Abeillard, they should become their own architects, and provide, in the first place, against the inclemencies of the air. Their master's cell gave the general plan. They tore down branches from the trees, and they twisted the pliant twigs. In a few hours the business was nearly completed. — Abeillard viewed, with infinite satisfaction, the busy scene; his approbation gave fresh life to their exertions; and it was no longer possible he could refuse his assent to a petition, which was pronounced with such unquestionable marks of sincerity".

He came forward: they read consent in his looks: "With to-morrow's sun, said he, I will meet you under yon spreading tree, and with the blessing of heaven on my endeavours, what instructions it may be in my power to give you, you shall freely receive from me." They heard his words with general acclamations.

The wants of nature now called for attention; but when the mind, engrossed with its own thoughts, retires in upon itself, these calls are easily satisfied. They, whom the luxurious tables of Paris could hardly gratify, now sat down to roots, and they found them savoury. The oaten cake had a relish, which they had not experienced in the ortolan. Their beds were made of dry weeds, or of the leaves which had fallen from the trees¹³.—Thus did this new tribe of philosophers prepare themselves for the approach of wisdom: the academic grove was truly seen to rise again, and never had the ancient sages on whose praises history dwells with wonder, fought for truth with more ardent inquiries. — Abeillard pronounced his first lecture: it was from the foot of the tree, I mentioned: his hearers were seated round; for they had made themselves benches of bows, and had raised the green turf into tables¹⁴.

I have before remarked how extraordinary was this thirst after knowledge, which, with a degree of enthusiasm, of which we can form no idea, spread itself over the states of Europe. But nothing can mark more strongly the fallen condition of literature. When learned men are common, and learning itself is very generally diffused, not only the means of acquiring it are at hand, but

¹³ Hist. Calam. ¹⁴ Ibid.

BOOK

IV.

there is also no novelty in the pursuit, calculated to excite peculiar energy and to rouse the passions. In the times I am describing, a learned man was a phenomenon; and who can be surprised that he should have been viewed with wonder? What is rare is highly prized; and what we prize is sought for, sometimes with an eagerness which astonishes cooler minds, and before which obstacles either vanish, or only serve to give an additional spring to exertions. — The scarcity of books, before the invention of printing, was likewise another principal circumstance, which, as it circumscribed the spread of learning, so did it render those, who, surmounting every impediment, attained it, objects of greater admiration.

Before the end of the first year, the number of Abeillard's scholars exceeded six hundred, situated in a forest, such as I have described, exposed to the inclement seasons, without a single convenience to smooth the rugged life, or without one amusement, excepting what literary pursuits, scientific conversation, and their own society could supply. — The subjects they discussed were either philosophical or religious, to which Abeillard added dissertations on the moral and social duties, which he could enliven by the brilliancy of his imagination, and by anecdotes drawn from sacred and profane history. But it matters little, as I have elsewhere observed, what our pursuits be,

provided they excite attention, and we place our interest in them. — The compositions indeed of Abeillard I can read with little pleasure; they are jejune, intricate, and inelegant; and to me such would have been his lectures. I could not have inhabited the Champagne forests, nor have travelled in quest of such literary lore; and my European contemporaries will not dissent from me: but this only shows that, with circumstances, our dispositions vary, and that nothing can be more irrational, than to measure by the same standard, the notions and characters of two ages so remote, as this and the twelfth century.

Abeillard, as it may be collected from his memoirs, at their hours of recreation, talked to his scholars of the ancient philosophers; he told them how these sages lived; he recounted the purity of their manners, and the eminence of their virtues: he turned to the sacred volumes, which relate the lives of the sons of the prophets; and here he found men who, near the waters of Jordan, had emulated the perfection of angels. With rapture he dwelt on the more than mortal virtues of the Baptist, and he followed the first converts to christianity through their exemplary course of self-abasement, of prayer, of recollection, and of temperance. With these splendid epochs he compared the present day. They listened with complacency. In Abeillard they saw the divine Plato: and in

BOOK
IV.

B O O K themselves that illustrious group of disciples ,
 IV. which had given renown to the academic walks of Athens.

But the serenity of the sky began to cloud over. His enemies heard , with indignation , of the success of his labors , and of the new honors which attended him in the wilderness. Should this be unopposed ; in what could it terminate , but in their own disgrace , and in the further exaltation of Abeillard ? Impatiently they looked to some event , which , from the character of their rival , or in the probable course of things , could not , they trusted , be very distant : this they would seize , and once more attempt his downfall.

He builds the
 Paraclet.

In the mean while , this learned colony daily increased and prospered more. But as the first enthusiasm abated , they could feel more sensibly the inconveniences , to which the inhospitable situation exposed them : these they now wished to remove , and to bring round them some few , at least , of the comforts of domestic life. They wanted not means , if they would turn them to advantage ; and they could even command what sums of money might be necessary , if expense were called for. Their master was destitute of every thing ; and for the intellectual treasures he supplied , were they to make no return ? Necessaries , at least , their own hands could give him : they improved

his cell, they tilled his field, they dressed his victuals, and they clothed him. — “My penury, “ says he of himself, was at that time extreme: “ but I could not dig, and to beg I was ashamed. “ Recurring therefore to the profession, I best “ understood, I made my tongue execute, what “ my hands were unfit for “.”

They then undertook to enlarge their place of worship; and they proposed doing it, on a more improved and permanent plan. Stones and timber were prepared; and from these they erected a building, inelegant indeed, but firm and respectable. The first humble structure, as I mentioned, was dedicated to the sacred Trinity. Now, in solemn ceremony, Abeillard and his disciples assembled: he explained to them the motives, which had induced him to prefer that mysterious name; and he added that, as he had entered this desert, sunk down with care, where the goodness of heaven had watched over him, and he had found comfort, could he more emphatically express his gratitude, than by consecrating this more august temple to that person of the holy triad, which more peculiarly is styled the Comforter? “ We will dedicate it, said he, to the *Pas-* “ *cract* “.”

¶ The circumstances of this event, Heloisa thus relates: “ On the very dens of wild beasts, and

“ Hist. Calam. “ Ibid.

BOOK

IV.

“ on the lurking holes of thieves, where the name
 “ of God had not been heard, you raised a
 “ temple to his name, and you consecrated it to
 “ his holy spirit. To this the donations of kings
 “ or princes did not contribute; you wanted not
 “ their aid. From all quarters, an almost infinite
 “ number of scholars crowded to be instructed
 “ by you. They supplied whatever was necessary.
 “ Even churchmen, who had been used to live
 “ on the donations of others, whose hands were
 “ ever open to receive, but not to give, became
 “ here profuse; they were importunate in their
 “ contributions.”

Great offence was taken by the zealots, when it was known, that Abeillard had dedicated his oratory to the Paraclet. It had not been heard, that any building had hitherto been put under the protection of that mysterious spirit. The Reimish professors were particularly loud: but it was a circumstance, they thought, which, if properly managed, might be turned to advantage. — When nothing seriously reprehensible, in the conduct or the belief of an adversary, can be detected, the merest trifle will be made matter of censure; especially any novelty in opinion or language will be noticed as a crime, on which malevolence, with wonderful rancor, will love to fasten. — A church, these wise casuists sagaciously observed,

¹⁷ Ep. Helois. 1^a.

might be dedicated to the Son or to the Holy Trinity, but not to the Father, nor to the Holy Spirit. — Abeillard, who should have smiled at the puerile nonsense, seemed seriously affected: he knew indeed the temper of his adversaries, and he very gravely undertook to justify what he had done, by arguments from scripture and reason. — To reason with such men was telling them that their observations merited notice: they would only repeat them with more inveteracy: ridicule is sometimes the best test of truth.

But the professors, it seems, were rather conscious of some weakness: they did not chuse to expose themselves alone in a controversy, which might require more than their own address to give it consequence: they had recourse to foreign aid. “Sensible, says Abeillard, that their own powers could not go far, they took care to instigate against me two new apostles, in whom the world then much confided. The one boasted that he had revived the spirit of the ancient canons; and the other that of the monks. These men, roaming about the earth, by their impudent invectives, rendered me contemptible in the eyes not only of the ecclesiastical, but also of some secular powers. The reports, they circulated, of my conduct and religious tenets, alienated the affections of my best friends; and the few, who still retained the smallest kindness

BOOK " for me, awed by the names of my opponents,
 IV. " judged it best to conceal their sentiments". —
 The one of these was Norbert of Premontre, and
 the other the famous Bernard of Clairvaux.

Norbert of
 Premontre.

St. Norbert, descended from an illustrious German family, was born in the dutchy of Cleves. When young, he was called to the court of the emperor, Henry the fifth, his relation. Here, the elegance of his manners, the affability of his temper, and the general charms of his deportment, gained him uncommon admiration. But what contributed to fashion his exterior, insensibly corrupted his heart: he became dissipated and licentious. The danger, to which his life was, one day, exposed from a violent storm of thunder, roused him to reflection: he withdrew from the court, resigned his employments, sold his estates, and distributed his riches among the poor. Thus disengaged from every tie, which united him to the world, he began a severe course of penance: but the mortifications he thought expedient for himself, he wished to inculcate to others. He preached to the neighbouring people; from them he carried his instructions to more distant provinces, and the success which attended his labors was great. His scheme of introducing a general reform, particularly among churchmen, was violently opposed: he met enemies at every step.

" Hist. Calam.

In 1118 he waited on pope Gelafius, who was in France, from whom he obtained an unbounded permission to preach, such as had been granted to Robert d'Arbriffelles. Two years afterwards he was prevailed on to make some stay at Laon, by his friend, the bishop of that city. He offered him for his retreat a neighbouring valley. Norbert was delighted with the solitary spot: it was called *Premontre*: and here he laid the foundation of that reformed order, which has taken its name from the vale. The cares of his rising family did not however confine him at home; he continued his former preaching, and travelled much¹⁹. — At this period it was that, infligated by the misrepresentations of the enemies of Abeillard, he made the philosopher, with whom he was not particularly acquainted, a subject of public reprehension.

The zeal of good men is often too irritable. Norbert was not very learned, and he would easily be imposed on by such men as Albericus and Lotulphus. — The wandering saint, in 1126, was chosen archbishop of Magdeburgh.

Bernard, the restorer of monastic discipline in the Western church, the engine, which gave life and energy to the religion and politics of Europe, the thaumatergus of the twelfth century, was born, in 1091, near Dijon, in Burgundy, of an ancient and noble family. His mother,

Bernard of
Clairvaux.

¹⁹ Fleury, vol. xiv.

BOOK

IV.

agrecably to the romantic piety of the age, awed by a dream, dévoted him, in a particular manner, to the service of God, whilst she bore him in her womb. He was the third of six sons. Nature had endowed him with uncommon abilities, and his education was fitted to his high destination. He loved retirement, he reflected much, and he spoke little, at a time, when youth is most forward and exuberant. He was simple in his manners, mild in conversation, and modest as angelic innocence. The beauty of his person accorded with the elegance of his mind: there was a harmony in his voice which captivated, his language was perspicuous, and eloquence, in sweetest accents fell, like honey, from his lips. — He entered the world, and every object seemed to smile at his appearance: ambition, science, pleasure, at once laid their charms at his feet. But Bernard could not be seduced. The world he saw was a perilous ocean; and so peculiar was his cast of mind, that vice, in whatever form it presented itself, only struck him with horror. Very soon the placid current of his thoughts was ruffled: in vain he strove to oppose the dissipation which, at every turn, met his eye; the counteraction of his soul was vehement; and he felt an enthusiasm stir within him, to which, till now, he had been a stranger.

The pleasing emotion, which this dangerous passion excites, has a thousand charms; because

though it pictures vice in the most horrid and disgusting forms, it, at the same time, represents virtue with every alluring feature: religion seems to hold before it its most exclusive blessings, and heaven, in all its glories, bursts upon the sight. But as the passions, which are styled the springs of life, are only serviceable, so long as they continue under the check of reason, and are ever, from their natural tendency, running to excess; so is religious enthusiasm of all passions the most dangerous: it takes its rise in excess, and is only ruled by impulse: it begins by hating vice, and soon carries its hatred to the vicious; to itself it takes the rewards of virtue and the promises of revelation, and to others it extends the judgments of heaven in this life, and its vindictive punishments in the next. — Bernard resolved to turn his back on a world, which only gave him disgust, and which he could not reform.

Cîteaux, in Burgundy, the first monastery of the Cistercian order, had been founded fifteen years: but the rule they had adopted was so severe, that very few had yet chosen to submit themselves to its austerities. It was to this institute that young Bernard turned his eyes: its rigid discipline seemed to harmonize with the state of his mind. His friends strenuously opposed the design, and they endeavoured to avert his attention. It was in vain: enthusiasm is not

B O O K IV. conquered by opposition. Rather his resolution daily gained strength: the call of heaven seemed to sound in his ears, and to charge him with indolence. — More than once he had experienced the efficacy of his own oratory, and he might suspect that the religious glow, which animated his own heart, could be communicated to others. In his design he was irrevocably fixed; but if he could take his friends along with him, it would be a glorious achievement, and the sacrifice to heaven would be more complete. He undertook it, and succeeded.

Awed into submission by a persuasive strain of eloquence, which was irresistible, to the aid of which he, at every turn, called heaven and its judgments, four of his brothers joined him in his undertaking; and very soon the number of his followers increased to thirty. This powerful reinforcement he conducted to Citeaux. — Bernard was, at this time, in his twenty-second year.

As he had withdrawn from the world, to be forgotten by it, and to bury himself in solitude; his first step was to banish every sentiment, which could tie him to society or to the earth. The mastery he acquired over his senses was astonishing: absorbed in the contemplation of heavenly things, he rose above the impressions of matter, and was truly a spiritual man. Having never indulged his passions, they could have no sway over him: he only ate to support nature, and he slept, when

his head, through lassitude, sank to the earth. To such incessant austerities the delicacy of his constitution gave way: like to a flower, cut by the mower's scythe, his health languished, his beauty withered, and he seemed to bend to the grave. But the vigor of his mind abated not, and the fervor of his devotion only grew into greater animation. It was necessary to check this ardent career, and the authority of superiors interposed.

BOOK
IV.

In 1115, Clairvaux was founded, and Bernard, though but beginning the second year of his religious life, was nominated abbot. His brothers went along with him. In this new post, where example was necessary to animate his followers, the young abbot exhibited fresh instances of his unbounded fervor. Clairvaux was a barren spot: the monks labored, and tilled its surface, but it only returned weeds, or a few weak and insipid vegetables. On these they lived. Bernard, in the retirement of his cell, conversed with angels: when he came out among his brethren, a heavenly brightness appeared to radiate from his countenance; he spoke of things, which they did not comprehend; and when he prescribed rules of conduct, or descanted on religious perfection, it seemed that he had forgotten, that his hearers were mortal. They listened with amazement; they admired his maxims; but they felt their weakness, and could only wish to practise what he taught.

BOOK

IV.

As the fame of his sanctity spread, he was visited from all quarters, and the silence of his retirement was broken. The affairs of his convent also, and sometimes the concerns of others, drew him into the world. Wherever he went, curiosity assembled thousands round him. He preached to them, laying before them the delights of solitude; and he returned to his cell, followed by innumerable profelytes, whom his eloquence had converted. — Now it was, as his historians relate, that nature began to be obedient to his voice; and the number of miracles, he is said to have worked, are recorded by them with veneration and astonishment.

Miracles.

I am ready to believe that Bernard, whom his disciples and the multitude viewed as a prodigy, and as the peculiar friend of heaven, might be very capable of producing such effects, as, at that time particularly, would be necessarily construed into miraculous operations. It can be denied by no one, who has attended to man; who knows the texture of his frame, the influence of circumstances, and the powers of imagination. — I must likewise grant, that he, to whose beck nature and nature's laws are ever obedient, can, when it pleases him, suspend their operation, or modify their effects. This, at all times, he has done: and who shall say, that he has ceased from doing it? — But when critically we examine the prodigies,

ascribed

ascribed to Bernard and other holy men , at these times of cimmerian darkness ; can we , consistently with the notions , which modern discoveries and the improved state of science suggest , attribute them to a real preternatural agency ? Had many of them happened , just as they are told , still , I think , they might , on philosophical principles , be accounted for ; but it is evident , that their relaters viewed them as wonders , and recorded them as such . A historian , under such impressions , would be too much disposed , even unintentionally , to depart from the simplicity of honest narration .

Ignorance , or a heated imagination , which would deceive the incautious spectator , might also impose on him , who should consider himself as the minister of omnipotence . Bernard , for instance , had heard of the miracles , which his predecessors or his contemporaries in sanctity had worked , and he had believed them : in similar circumstances , an unusual impulse would seem to move within him , and he would think divine providence was preparing to make use of him as an instrument , of his mercies or of his judgments to man . Such a sentiment would , by no means , be inconsistent with the most perfect piety and self-abasement . — But is it credible that he , who , in infinite wisdom established his eternal laws on the fitness and universal relation of things , would

BOOK
IV.

B O O K subvert the divine harmony of his system, unless
 1Y. a crisis, worthy of it, should intervene? I do not find this crisis in the vulgar history of the miracles of the dark ages.

When a new religion, such as the christian, was to be founded or propagated, extraordinary means would be sometimes necessary. Incredulity, rivetted on habits and the strong opposition of inveterate prejudices, was to be surmounted; and it was expedient that the mission of him, who delivered a new and unheard of doctrine, should be established on an authority, which nothing might controvert. — In the times of Bernard, was there an object, like this, in agitation? Or rather, is not he said to have worked miracles, the general importance of which cannot be discovered; for they regard private interests, personal views, and sometimes, it appears, rather unimportant matters. — A man of family and his relation had suddenly lost his speech and his recollection. His friends were afflicted, that he should die without confession and the rites of the church, and they came to Bernard. The saint assured them that, if satisfaction were made to the church and the poor, which the nobleman had pillaged and oppressed, he should recover, and be in a situation to confess his sins. They agreed to the conditions. Bernard then fell on his knees; when news was brought him, that the sick man had recovered his speech.

He then made his confession to the saint, performed other works of piety, and died after three days²⁰. BOOK
IV.

— Let this miracle, which was wonderfully celebrated, as the first which the saint worked, be tried by the received canons of impartial criticism.

It is remarkable that, in proportion as the clouds of ignorance have dispersed, as science has diffused its benign influence, and as religion has been purified from the base allay of human opinions, those portentous events have ceased to happen. The circumstance, it must be owned, is not favorable to the credit of our pious ancestors. Why should providence withhold his preternatural interference at a time, mankind is best able to appreciate the wondrous system of his ways, and would be most disposed to honor them? Ignorance, superstition, bigotry, and enthusiasm, have, most clearly, attended the progress of miraculous operations, through that long series of years, when their appearance was thought to be most frequent. — Many, I know, of those events might, in a certain sense, be termed miraculous, because they exceeded the powers of nature, as these were then understood. Carry back into the twelfth century, the astonishing effects of animal magnetism, or the resuscitations, which almost daily take place, of persons apparently dead by drowning or suffocation, what astonishment would be excited!

²⁰ Fleury, vol. xiv.

BOOK IV. Ignorant of such causes which, in the regular course of things, could produce the effect; to what could they have recourse but to preternatural agency? And they would be justified in the judgment, they might form. On us it is incumbent to be more cautious: with the accuracy of inquiry we weigh modern events, proportioning causes to effects, we should measure those of our more credulous, because less informed, ancestors.

The author of miracles is likewise the author of nature: nor is he more admirable, when he departs from established order, than when, uniformly omnipotent, he conducts, with unerring rectitude, the vast system of the universe. The general ways of providence are to me more awful and sublime, because they proceed on plans, which infinite wisdom projected and supports: but in miraculous events, which to us are deordinations, that same providence, out of compassion to human weakness, descends from his sphere of incomprehensible greatness, and deigns to speak to our senses a language, which may over-awe reason, and command an involuntary assent. Had man been more perfect than he is, the intervention of miracles would have been unnecessary: they are no compliment to the powers of human intellect.

It was, when the reputation of Bernard was high, and he began to draw himself from solitude

into public observation, that Abeillard, whose character and habits of thinking had been unfairly represented, became an object of his censure. Bernard was incautiously betrayed into a vehement animosity, which is hardly reconcileable with the upright dispositions of his mind: means therefore must have been used as imposing, as they were ungenerous. The prejudice, he imbibed against him, sank deep in his heart, as will be seen in the continuation of my history.

B O O K
IV.

Abeillard, whom the news of this powerful confederation struck with amazement, saw the danger, to which he was exposed. His heart sank within him: "God is my witness, says he, as often as I was told of any ecclesiastical meeting, I conceived it was assembled against me; and in trepidation I waited the summons, which would drag me to their bar²¹."—The remembrance of Soissons haunted his recollection, and as he wanted fortitude to withstand the impression, he fell, like a broken reed, before it. In despair he meditated the wildest plans: he would retire, he thought, from the confines of the christian world; he would seek refuge among the disciples of Mahomet; where, under the stipulation of such a tribute, as they should please to impose, he should be at liberty, he trusted, to lead the life of a christian amongst the enemies of Christ. When they should hear,

Abeillard is
chosen abbot
of St. Gildas.

²¹ Hist. Calam.

BOOK that he had been accused of holding opinions,
 IV. adverse to christianity, they might be inclined, he thought, to treat him more gently; they might even imagine, he could be profelyted to their belief²².

Lost in these desponding thoughts, he indulged the romantic wish of expatriating himself for ever: the Paraclet could no longer give him pleasure; he suspended his lessons, his scholars in part withdrew, and nothing but desolation and the horrors of the wilderness rose in prospect before him. But unexpectedly an event took place, which promised, if not thoroughly to alleviate his misfortunes, at least to break the dark cloud, which lowered round him. When anxiety presses, or pain, of whatever description, makes life uneasy, the most trifling variation gives relief.

There was in Little Britany a monastery, of very ancient renown, founded, as it is said, in the fifth century, by Gildas our countryman, in the reign of king Childeric, the son of Meroveus²³. It was called St. Gildas de Ruys; and the abbot was lately dead. Abeillard, by the unanimous voice of the monks, was chosen superior of this house, and the duke of Britany gave his warmest approbation to their choice. The philosopher, a native of the province, would be naturally admired by his

²² Hist. Calam. ²³ Notæ Quercet.

countrymen, and they would wish to possess him. A messenger was sent to St. Denys to beg the consent of Suger, to whom Abeillard still belonged: his consent was easily obtained. The deputy then proceeded into Champagne; where he found Abeillard in his retirement, abashed and melancholy, and he laid before him the letters of his promotion, which he had brought from St. Gildas. The philosopher perused them with the indifference of a man, who was neither flattered by the proffered honors, nor could augur much happiness to himself in the event. He paused: his present heart-breaking situation was to be weighed against the uncertainty of future prospects.—Should he retire from the Paraclet; the persecutions, which again threatened him, would cease perhaps, and he might be happy: but the land, to which he was called, was almost barbarous, and their language was unknown to him: besides, report had told him, that the monks of St. Gildas were dissipated and undisciplined; and how much had he not suffered from this circumstance in the abbey of St. Denys? But he who sees a naked dagger, suspended by a hair over his head, would rush into a precipice to avoid its point.—In a more favorable view; was not command offered him? And might he not be able, by the exertion of it, to repress the bad conduct of his monks, and to establish his own authority? They might also be

BOOK IV. inclined to respect his learning, his virtue, and his renown.—The last reflection preponderated, and he answered the messenger, that he was ready to accompany him into Britany²⁴. Still, his heart was heavy: he left the Paraclet, committing it to the care of two intimate friends.

Abeillard soon was sensible how imprudently he had made his choice. He found St. Gildas in a state of depravation, of which no idea could have been formed; and he was more than surprised, that they should ever have fixed on him for their superior. Their general language was the harsh jargon of the country; and he knew not how to make them sensible of the enormities of their lives, or of his design to reform them. The obligations of his charge were however pressing; and though he foresaw the anxiety and dangers, to which it would expose him, he determined not to neglect his duty. As well might he have attempted to preach virtue to a band of lawless robbers.—In aggravation to all this, the lord of the territory, a man of considerable power, availing himself of the notorious conduct of the monks, had not only contrived to subject the abbey to his control, but had also seized such of their possessions, as pleased him best: the whole country groaned under his exactions²⁵.

²⁴ Hist. Calam. ²⁵ Ibid.

To distress their abbot, whose schemes of reformation they abhorred, the monks importunately applied to him for clothing and other necessaries; though they knew he was destitute of every thing. Hitherto they had made their own provisions; and out of the stock, they could steal or lay by, had contrived to support themselves, their concubines, and their sons and daughters. More than ever they were now active to pilfer the common store, that Abeillard, finding it impossible to satisfy their wants, might be forced to withdraw himself from amongst them, or to drop his tasteless scheme of reformation²⁶.

This situation of Abeillard was really more distressful, than any he had hitherto experienced. When he looked round him, he says, he could discover nothing but a most barbarous and lawless people, from whom nor assistance, nor advice, could be expected; their notions and habits of life were in direct opposition to his own. If he quitted the door of his convent, the tyrant, just mentioned, or his guards, met his eye; and their gestures told him that he was their slave. If he returned home; there was a worse enemy waiting within, whose intemperate clamors sounded, like the shrieks of discord, in his ears. He viewed the harsh decrees of fate, which, with an accelerated

²⁶ Hist. Calam.

BOOK IV. force, seemed to weigh upon him; and if, in rueful despondency, he lamented, we must now forgive him. He recollected that, on former occasions, he might have given some cause for oppression; but that now he was guiltless: he recollected that, hitherto it had been at least in his power to do some good by example or instruction, and therein comfort might be found; but that now every exertion was as useless to himself, as it was to others: he recollected all the reposeful moments of the Paraclet, and in the recollection his mind was too sedulous to omit every care, which had really disturbed their serenity. — “ And “ could I leave the Paraclet, exclaimed he, that “ is, the comforter, to rush into certain misery? “ I was threatened indeed; but must I run from “ threats, when dangers, I knew, would “ inevitably overtake me at every step” !” Nor was he a little hurt, that he should have left his dear oratory in so neglected a state; that he had not provided for the due celebration of divine service: but what could he do, who was poor? Or could a wilderness make up the deficiencies of penury?

Argenteuil is
taken from
the nuns.

At this time, Suger, abbot of St. Denys, whose power was great in the court of Lewis the sixth, thinking the moment favorable for the completion of a scheme, which he had for some time agitated,

²⁷ Hist. Calam.

assembled the chapter of his convent, and laid his design before them. He had discovered in some old writings of his abbey, that Argenteuil, where Heloisa, as the reader will recollect, resided, belonged in strict justice to St. Denys. This right he resolved to urge, whilst he had power in his hands, which could give it efficacy. The chapter applauded his design. Without delay deputies were sent to Rome, vested with ample authority, and they carried with them such papers, as were requisite, to establish the ground of their pretensions. — In addition to this right, which was weak in itself, and by prescription obsolete²⁸, Suger was in possession of another plea, in which probably he confided most. The nuns of Argenteuil, if there be truth in his representation, were dissolute and worldly-minded: this circumstance, with all the glow of description, was to be laid before the Roman pontiff. Could he obtain his request, he assured Honorius, that, where vice and dissipation now prevailed, he would introduce, with his monks, a system of reform, which should do honor to the monastic institute. — It is remarkable that Suger, who could not be ignorant of the enormities, with which his own house was charged, should have the effrontery to insist on arguments, which must

²⁸ Notæ Quercet.

BOOK necessarily bring reprehension on himself. The
 IV. negociation however succeeded, and Argentueil, with all its appendages, was solemnly made over to the abbey of St. Denys. The king, whom Suger calls his master and his friend, confirmed the donation about the year 1127²⁹.

Heloisa was prioress, that is, second in office, when this unpleasant event happened. I am willing to hope, though she was involved in the general accusation, that she was innocent of the crimes, with which Argentueil was charged. Abeillard relates the fact, I have mentioned; but he only speaks of the pretended right, on which Suger founded his claim. Nor do I think that, either love for Heloisa, or a general feeling for her sisters, would have with-held his pen, had he known them to be guilty in the degree some historians represent: they take their accounts from Suger.

✓ The lovely prioress had been seven years in confinement: to the historian they are seven years of silence. His imagination, indeed, is free to delineate her actions and her gentle turn of character, as fancy may direct; but had the regular series of her employments been minutely recorded, it would have afforded little indulgence to curiosity. The life of a nun is uniformly composed of a thousand little actions and trifling incidents;

²⁹ Suger, de reb. a se gest.

and the history of one day may be esteemed the history of her life. Heloisa, we may presume, wore away her days in prayer, in study, in conversation, in retirement: but if the conduct of the sisterhood was such, as Suger tells, the want of discipline would allow her more room for the indulgence of her own peculiar dispositions, and their excesses might disturb her little. She had entered Argenteuil, we know, with great reluctance, though in perfect submission to the will of Abeillard: if therefore her heart but slowly bent itself to the maxims of a recluse, it was but natural. Her fortitude was great; but the example, which surrounded her, was ill-adapted to prepare her soul for the ingress of divine grace, or rather perhaps of that amiable enthusiasm, which can give sweetness to solitude and to the many little practices, which form the tissue, and constitute the almost essential character of the monastic life.

It was in this house she had received the rudiments of those literary accomplishments, which, in a dark age, rendered her a prodigy of science. The same means would afterwards supply her more abundant occasions of improvement; and doubtless she availed herself of them. She had listless hours to fill up, she had anxious cares to remove, she had the unavailing thoughts of a lover to repress, and she had a heavy heart to cheer,

BOOK

IV.

It was well she could find any employment, which might answer these important ends, and which could occupy her attention. But the idea of Abeillard, as I shall have ample occasion to remark, had so modified her heart, that it seems to have been associated with the motion of every fibre, which composed it.

Heloisa goes
to the Pa-
clet.

Suger having obtained the grant, he so anxiously wished, (for Argenteuil was, at that time, a very opulent establishment,) was not slow in bringing it to execution. He sent a peremptory order to the nuns; commanding them to surrender their convent into his hands, and he signified to them the authorities, on which he proceeded. They refused to obey; when force was employed, and they were violently ejected¹⁰. — It is said, that Suger had signed an agreement, whereby he promised to provide for the support of the nuns: and part of the community, it is known, was received into a neighbouring convent¹¹. But Heloisa, with a few companions, was thrown on the world, without succour and without friends.

Abeillard was at St. Gildas, forlorn as I described him, when he heard of this event. However selfish he might be, he could not but feel for the situation of Heloisa; and on his mind hung another thought, which would prompt him to be more active in her service. I have said, that he was

¹⁰ Hist. Calam.

¹¹ Nota Quereet.

much attached to the Paraclet, and that he lamented, he had been obliged to leave it in so neglected a condition. Now did an occasion present itself, when he might indulge his partiality for that place; and by succouring the distressed, he might perhaps also be able to raise it even to celebrity, and himself to inherit the glory, which belonged to the founders of convents. The idea pleased him: he left St. Gildas, and went over into Champagne¹².

From thence he acquainted Heloisa of his intentions. — She who, since her retirement from the world, had heard nothing of him, but what fame had reported, received his invitation to the Paraclet with rapture. How enchanting the reflection, that she was not forgotten by the man she loved; and that she should be succoured by him, when no other friend appeared, and the earth had not an asylum for her! In the thought were absorbed all her cares, and all the neglectful treatment of Abeillard. To her companions she communicated the joyful news: they acceded to her proposal, and immediately departed for the Paraclet. — In the number, which was eight, were Agnes and Agatha, two nieces of Abeillard¹³.

The reader may please his imagination, in picturing to himself the first interview betwixt

¹² Hist. Calam. ¹³ Vie d'Abeil. p. 274. Notæ Quercet.

BOOK

IV.

Abeillard and Heloisa. No two persons, who had once been lovers, ever met in less accordant characters. He, cold as marble, stern from philosophy, sore from ill-usage, broken by affliction, and religious, because the hand of fate had made him so. His misfortunes had also preyed upon his cheek, and he was no more the airy, the handsome, the sprightly Abeillard, who had animated the gayest circles of Paris. — On the other hand, Heloisa, who was but yet in her eight-and-twentieth year, had lost little of her former charms: the veil had not disfigured her features, nor had retirement given any harshness to the tone of her mind: she was gentle as she had ever been, and what encroachments, either care, or years, or application had made, were at this moment compensated by the inward glow, which the sight of Abeillard excited, and which beamed upon her countenance, in every expression of joy, of gratitude, of benevolence, of love. — He showed her the situation of the Paraclet, the cell where he had dwelt, the other habitations which his scholars had constructed, and the temple they had raised. These, and whatever else, from the donations of his friends, he could call his own, in lands or other possessions, he made over to Heloisa, and he confirmed them to her and her successors, for ever, by a solemn donation³⁴. She was then

³⁴ Hist. Calam.

unanimously

unanimously chosen abbefs of the new eftablifhment; and the little community, difpofing of itfelf in the moft commodious manner, entered on their various duties. BOOK
IV.

Abeillard viewed, with pleafure, this commencement of a rifing family; and having exhorted them to piety, and to concord, and to the faithful obfervance of their rule, which was that of St. Bennet, as they had brought it from Argenteuil, he took his leave, and returned to St. Gildas.

Great were the diftreffes, to which Heloifa and her fifters were, at firft, expofed: they were poor, and the Paraclet could not fupply them with the common neceffaries of life. Cheerfully, however, they fubmitted to their fate, and they praftifed, as they could, the duties of their profeflion, looking up to him for fupport, who nourifhes the brood of the raven, which calls to him for food. Heloifa alfo, in the fame fubmiffion of mind, drew additional confolation from every object, with which was joined the dear recollection of Abeillard. But foon their wants were relieved. The neighbouring people, whom the pious behaviour of the holy fiftershood, edified, and whom their diftreffes moved to compaffion, came in to their affiftance³⁵. Nor were they fatisfied to adminifter a mere temporary relief: Milo, lord of Nogent,

³⁵ Hift. Calam.

BOOK

IV.

gave them three farms, and a considerable portion of land, which lay near to their inclosure; he also allowed them to cut down, in his forest, such wood, as they might want for firing or for building. Soon after his niece professed herself a nun at the Paraclet, when Milo increased his benefactions, and granted them a right of fishery in the river, which ran near their convent. —To these donations, others were added by the nobility of the country. Matilda, countess of Champagne, was particularly liberal; and even Lewis, king of France, would be numbered amongst their benefactors. The Paraclet was not then subject to his laws; but he granted the nuns permission to buy and sell in his dominions, without paying any duties to himself or successors, for ever³⁶. — Such liberal and unsolicited contributions show the character of the times.

“ In a single year, says Abeillard, they acquired
 “ greater possessions, than would have fallen into
 “ my hands, had I labored a hundred on the
 “ spot³⁷.” This good fortune he particularly ascribes to the powerful efficacy of female distress. As nature has formed women weak, and little able to provide for their own wants, their petitions, he thinks, are more apt to move us; and their virtue, if suffering, is an object, which challenges the

³⁶ Quercet. ex Tab. Paraclet. ³⁷ Hist. Calam.

regard of God and men. “ But so many were the
“ attractions, continues he, which, in the eyes of
“ every beholder, divine providence gave to
“ Heloisa, that bishops viewed her as a daughter,
“ abbots as a sister, and the laity loved her as a
“ mother. Her piety, her prudence, her patience,
“ her gentleness of character, commanded univer-
“ sal admiration. Seldom she appeared in public;
“ the retirement of her cell was better adapted to
“ holy meditation and to prayer: but her society
“ was ardently sought for, and strangers wished
“ to be improved by her edifying conversation.”

It is the delineation of a perfect character; but let it be observed, that this is the first time, that Abeillard has spoken of Heloisa and of her conduct, in terms of approbation. Her behaviour at the Paraclet must have pleased him well, and I conceive the portrait to be faithful. To praise too freely was not his disposition, and flattery, he seems, to have cautiously reserved for himself. Heloisa was as wax in his hands, and to all his inclinations she would mould her soul. When she saw that he was an altered man; that he was pious, reserved, meditative, and religiously severe, at once she adopted his maxims, and she appeared a finished pattern of monastic perfection. There were moments, - I believe, when grace was not so triumphant: love and nature would sometimes

B O O K prevail; and we shall see how reluctantly they
IV. surrendered a heart, which seemed made to be
 possessed by them alone.

Abeillard is
 again cen-
 sured.

Whilst the Paraclet was in distress, Abeillard had not neglected it. He was often informed of their situation, and was sometimes blamed by the gentlemen in the neighbourhood, that he did not sufficiently exert his abilities in their support: would he preach publicly, and declare their wants, there was little doubt, they said, of the most flattering success³⁸. Repeatedly therefore he had gone over to them; and now when fortune began to smile, and the Paraclet attracted the notice of the charitable and the opulent, he did not discontinue his visits. How delightful to him was this spot, which he had always loved! But when he compared the gentle manners, the innocent conversation: the docile submission, and the attentive solicitude of his nuns, with the boisterous and untoward deportment of the monks of St. Gildas, it was natural he should leave the Paraclet with regret, and should return to it with ardor. — He had projected a scheme, it seems, of passing much of his time with them: he would attend to the due administration of their temporal concerns, he would instruct, and he would edify them. “And since, says he, the incessant opposition of my own

³⁸ Hist. Calam.

“ subjects became so insufferable , I thought, I
 “ could sometimes withdraw from the tumultuary
 “ scene, and breathe the serene air of this charming
 “ solitude. I should not be useless to them ; my
 “ presence even might be occasionally necessary ”.”

These visits of Abeillard to the Paraclet were soon noticed by his enemies. Innocent surely they were, and, in many regards, laudable; but they could be misconstrued , and malevolence would not lose the satisfaction of indulging her favorite pursuit. “ The eunuch is not quite so insensible ,
 “ as we imagined, said they: the trees, the brooks,
 “ the whispering zephyrs of the Paraclet are
 “ indeed charming, and Abeillard is charitable and
 “ humane ; but since Heloisa has been there, we
 “ can hardly count his visits: may it be that
 “ Fulbert’s niece has yet some charms for the pious
 “ solitary ”.”

The malicious insinuation reached the ears of Abeillard , and he was still too irritable to disregard it. Again he entered on a tedious exculpation of himself; and from ancient authorities undertook to prove, that such beings as himself were always accounted harmless. His fate , he thought, was peculiarly hard. But if the mere associating with women could be deemed criminal, not our Saviour, or his apostles , or the primitive fathers, should

” Hist. Calam. ” Ibid.

BOOK

IV.

have escaped reprehension. It was from the example of Jerom only that he could derive consolation: he, like himself, had been defamed; why then should he murmur⁴¹.—His adversaries laughed at his defence, and only repeated their reflections. The disconsolate man could withstand them no longer; he sighed, and with a heavy heart, returned once more into Britany, resolved to submit to his cruel destiny, and to turn his back for ever on the fair inhabitants of the Paraclet⁴².

He settles at
St. Gildas,
and is persecuted
by his
monks.

To cheer, as far as might be, the melancholy hours, and that St. Gildas might not be the grave of his talents, as it was of his peace of mind, he undertook to discuss certain theological subjects, which were afterwards published, and of which I shall have occasion to speak.—The refractory monks persevered in their lawless excesses; and at once provoked that Abeillard should be resolute not to desert his post, and that he even seemed capable of indulging his favorite pursuits, in the midst of their clamors, they meditated higher schemes of vengeance. They had recourse to poison, which they mixed up with the dishes, or threw into the liquors, which were prepared for his table. By good fortune, or by address, he escaped these nefarious machinations.—They then attempted to poison the chalice, which, held the wine for the

⁴¹ Hist. Calam. ⁴² Vie d'Abeil. p. 296.

sacrifice of the altar: but in this also they failed of success⁴³. Among the monks he had friends, who were careful to give him timely notice of the designs of his enemies. — From the circumstance of the poisoned *chalice*, we discover that Abeillard was, at this time, a priest. When he took holy orders is uncertain, though it probably happened whilst he was at St. Denys, soon after his admission into that convent.

Conon, count of Nantes, being dangerously ill, had requested Abeillard to come over to him. He obeyed the summons, taking with him only one servant, and a young monk, whom he much esteemed. In preference to the count's palace, Abeillard chose a more humble dwelling: he had a brother living at Nantes, and with him he lodged. Here it was that the servant, whom the monks had corrupted before he left St. Gildas, attempted to execute another scheme they had laid to poison their abbot. They had judged that, at so great a distance, he would suspect no stratagem, and that at last they should be successful. The dish was prepared; but when it was laid before his master, either from want of appetite, or as he himself remarks, by the care of divine providence, he was not disposed to eat. The young monk was not equally protected; he ate, was soon after seized with convulsions, and expired in extreme torture.

⁴³ Hist. Calam.

B O O K
IV.

The servant instantly disappeared; from which it was evident, who had been the perpetrator of the horrid deed *. — Abeillard remained some time longer at Nantes: it was almost his native spot, and here his name was in great estimation; but after the count's recovery, he judged proper to return to his abbey.

As the atrocious designs of the monks were now publicly known, Abeillard was advised to be more on his guard: he withdrew therefore, with a few companions, to some cells at a distance, where, it was imagined, he would be more secure. But such enemies, as were the monks of St. Gildas, are not easily deterred from a fixed purpose: they followed Abeillard to his cells. Here they watched his motions; and whenever they were told that he had ventured to move from home, they waited his return; and they posted assassins near the roads through which he was to pass. Nor were these attempts more successful. A favorite indeed of heaven must have been the man, whom such repeated attacks could never, in the least, injure! But, as usual, I suspect the tale to be exaggerated.

An accident, however, soon befel him, which proved that he was not at least invulnerable. Riding out, one day, for amusement, or on business, his horse violently threw him, by which his neck was

* Hist. Calam.

dislocated. He was relieved by immediate assistance; but the consequences of his fall, he complains, were very painful, and they caused a general debility, from which he never quite recovered⁴⁵.

No sooner was he able to move about, than he resolved, seeing not the most gentle usage could mollify their fury, nor the utmost caution guard him any longer from their insults, to try on his enemies the effects of canonical censures. In an ignorant age, these have been sometimes known to succeed, when other arms have failed. He excommunicated the most refractory. Intimidated by the sentence, their arrogant effrontery seemed disposed to relent: they acquainted their abbot, that voluntarily they would leave St. Gildas, and never more give him the smallest disturbance, if he would withdraw the censure he had pronounced. Abeillard accepted their proposal; to comply with which they solemnly bound themselves by an oath. But such ties would avail little; they did not quit St. Gildas, and very soon recommenced their wonted career of profligacy and base intrigue. Abeillard resolved to have recourse to Rome.

Innocent the second was then pope. To him the behaviour of these unruly miscreants was stated, and he dispatched a minister, with legatine

⁴⁵ Hist. Calam.

B O O K powers, whose duty it should be, on the spot,
 IV, to examine the truth of the charges, and to pronounce sentence. Before the duke of Britany and the neighbouring prelates the cause was heard: the criminality of the monks was notorious; and the legate compelled them, again upon oath, to subscribe to the former conditions. The business seemed terminated, and the Roman envoy departed “.

After the departure of the most factious members, Abeillard came out from his retirement: he presumed, that all danger was over, and that, in confidence, he might resume the government of his abbey. He was mistaken: the remaining part of the community, either possessed all the animosity, or they were disposed to take up the quarrel, of their exiled brethren. What poison, and the sword of hired assassins, had not effected, they doubted not could be executed by their own arm. In the night-time, with daggers in their hands, they assailed his apartments: he was awakened by the noise, and had time to escape. A subterraneous passage offered him an asylum, through which he passed, and was received into the house of a neighbouring gentleman “. This is a forced translation of the passage; the truth is, that they were only meditating this dark scheme, when

“ Hist. Calam. “ Vie d’Abeil. t. ii. p. 14.

Abeillard was apprized of it, and by the friendly assistance of a certain nobleman was rescued from the danger, which threatened him⁴⁸.

A more deplorable state than this will not easily be conceived; and the life of Abeillard seemed to be winding up in the true form of tragedy: his mind was not equal to the pressure of circumstances, and his lamentations are all drawn in character. "The evils which surround me, says he, thicken every hour, and I see the naked sword suspended over my head. How like am I to the deluded courtier of the Sicilian tyrant! With the wealth and gaudy pageantry of royalty before him, he viewed the dagger pointed at his life, and at once the dream of happiness was over. From the lowly condition of a poor monk I was raised to wealth and honors; and thus it ends: my misery has increased with my preferment. Let my example be a warning to those, whom ambition may prompt to venture spontaneously on the treacherous path of worldly grandeur."—Then in the most religious sentiments he proceeds. "But since all things happen by the divine appointment; in every distress this should be the christian's consolation, that the goodness of heaven permits nothing to derange its all-perfect system; from evil good is ultimately deduced. Let this be our prayer: *Thy will be done!*"

⁴⁸ Hist. Calam.

BOOK IV. "How inordinately, therefore, do they act who
"confess that the hand of God directs all events, yet
"murmur when they suffer: it is their own will
"which they look to, whatever their words may
"be; and in seeking that, they tacitly oppose
"the unerring ways of providence".

In these sentiments, which became the abbot of St. Gildas, he purposed still to remain at his convent, hoping that time, and lenient measures, might at last give success to his exertions. In the same sentiments it was, that he wrote the memoirs of his own life, which are brought up to this period, and here they close, about the year 1134.

"Hist. Calam.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

Date Due

NOV 10 1990			
NOV 10 1990			
NOV 30 1990			
JAN 28 1991			
NOV 06 1991			
NOV 01 1992			
DEC 02 1993			
MAR -5 1997			
MAR 05 1997			

TUFTS UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES



3 9090 001 317 508

BX 4705 .A2 B4 1793 v.1
Berinston, Joseph, 1746-1827
The history of the lives of
Abigail and Heloise,

